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## Abstract

This research concerns itself with the development of a theory in the *grounded* tradition to account for the social construction of an identity as *musician* by music education students in Canadian universities. The principal data gathering techniques were semi- and unstructured interviews and participant observation, first at the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Music, University of Western Ontario with further periods of interviewing at the University of Alberta and the University of British Columbia. The pilot study was conducted at Memorial University of Newfoundland where the author was, at the time of writing, an Associate Professor and Co-ordinator of Music Education in the Faculty of Education.

Data collection and analysis were completed simultaneously and the interviewing became more focused on emerging categories and their properties, particularly concerning the construction of identity. The core categories discussed concern the apparent sense of isolation and the development of a *symbolic* community in the music school, as suggested by Cohen (1985). Further core analytic categories include the music education students' perceptions of Others as outsiders to their own insider *symbolic* community, and the students' perception of social action, including the notion of deviancy, which contributes to their construction of this symbolic closed community. An examination of models of social action is undertaken. The notion of *making points* as suggested by Goffman (1967) provides a beginning model for the identification and

accumulation of status points which students appear to use in the process of identity construction and validation.

Further discussion examines the nature of the music education sub-group as a stigmatized group. The nature of the category *musician* is examined and substantial comparison and contrasting with the position presented by Kingsbury (1984) is undertaken. The analytical categories of *talent* and *music* as in-group constructs are examined.

Finally the processes of Self-Other negotiation on are explored and a theory is developed to account for the construction and maintenance of musician identity. The emerging theory borrows extensively from those analyses of the roots of social interaction recognised in the labelling tradition which are concerned with the construction of identity in negotiation with Others, and most specifically draws upon the notion of *societal reaction*.

The research is guided by those theories and methodologies generated by symbolic interactionism developed by writers such as Blumer, Meltzer and Denzin and follows the traditions of sociological research in educational settings by such writers as Baksh, Martin and Stebbins in Canada, and Hargreaves, Woods, Ball, Hammersley and Lacey in the U.K.

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**The Social Construction of "musician"  
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in Canadian Universities**

**Introduction**



# Introduction

This research attempts to build a theory in the grounded tradition (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to account for the interaction of music education students<sup>1</sup> in Canadian universities as they come to construct<sup>2</sup> an identity<sup>3</sup> as "musician". The assumption taken here is that the meaning of "musician" is a social construction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) for these students and that music education students interact on the basis of the meanings that they come to associate with this social construct. It will be shown that this construct is a pivotal component of the music education students' identity, in fact, an all engulfing construct (Hargreaves, 1976:204) in the formation of their identity. The music education students appear to seek to acquire an identity as a "musician" which they seem to construct as having a core meaning "performer" and this process of construction appears largely dependant upon social interaction<sup>4</sup> and most particularly through societal reaction.

Within the process<sup>5</sup> of music teacher education in Canadian universities, however, what counts as "musician" is not as unproblematic as might be assumed. Without a long excursion into the field of the sociology of knowledge (Young, 1971), it must be stated that there is widespread disagreement in the literature as to the nature of the "musician" that eventually ends up as a teacher in front of our children in the schools. Witkin (1974:120) suggests that "one of the problems is that the music teacher is usually himself trained from the point of view of the instrumentalist". There is, he asserts,

"among music teachers, a fear and distrust of experiment, of musical invention, of anything that threatens the disciplined service to the musical masters that their training has developed in them" (:120). Witkin makes these assertions without attempting to explore any further the "truth" that they might hold. One might ask in what ways does their training develop these asserted attitudes of fear and distrust? But Witkin is so sure of this position as a result of his enquiry into the state of the arts in the schools that he writes (1974:118), "Of all the arts that we have looked at in schools music is apparently in the greatest difficulty". His suggestion is that many of these difficulties in music education stem from the kind of training that music teachers undergo. His conclusions hint strongly that there is conflict between who the teacher is and wants his pupils to be<sup>6</sup> and what might be perceived as a more legitimate instructional goal<sup>7</sup> for school music education.

Another attack on the perceived status quo of school music comes from Vulliamy (1977:206). He writes that "such an approach to music education involves a radical redefinition of what counts as "music" when he reports on the "new" wave of student as composer movement in music education.<sup>8</sup> Postman (1970:251) has suggested that the only way teachers can maintain control over students is "by carefully discriminating against what the student knows - that is by labelling what the student knows as unimportant". This leads to the conclusion that school music has managed a control over what counts as good "music" and worthy of curriculum inclusion. Small (1987:176) also writes of the social control that exists to define the world's most worthy or best musics. He has stark words for music departments in the universities when he writes that,

the majority of university music departments are still stuck in an exclusive concern with the past...Like all institutions,

universities on the whole tend to be intolerant of genuine innovation...Tame artists, in fact, make good pets for university establishments as long as they do not attack their masters (not for real at any rate).

It can be seen that music education in the schools is not without its critics. It has been shown that the school music curriculum has been challenged because it appears subservient to the old masters in a recreative fashion of reading and writing the "right" notes rather than being a creative venture for the development of the pupil's aesthetic spirit. It has also been criticised because of the perceived culture clash between the old masters' values of good classical musical and the culture of rock and pop music.

In a study of university music education students in Texas, USA by L'Roy (1983), the conclusion reached is that specialized skills and knowledge are required to become a music teacher. What is challenged is the nature of that knowledge and skill base. L'Roy (1983:183) writes,

Undergraduate students in any school of music at any college are called upon to prove their worth as performer through juries each semester. Students are also required to take applied lessons, participate in ensembles, and to perform in a variety of departmental recitals as a matter of common practice to receive any kind of undergraduate music degree. It can be seen that they are being tested and rewarded for competence in performance constantly throughout their tenure in school. They are learning specialized skills and knowledge which are evaluated by peers and teachers alike. They are learning meaningful gestures which allow them to communicate with other musicians. Because the performance requirements of any music degree are structured in a sequential order, it contributes strongly to the development of a role concept as musician-performer.

This is not to say that these requirements and experiences are not valid. Rather, it must be understood that they are not the gestures of music education. They are related, but not the same.

To explore the nature of the "music" in the university is an ethnomusicological question and has been undertaken by Kingsbury (1984). To explore the nature of the meanings that the music education students take with respect to this music and each other as "musicians" is the goal of this study. It is a music education problem that is becoming ever more important to investigate as music education in the schools is perceived by many to be growing further and further apart from the apparently steadfast hold on the "classical" tradition that university music departments allow themselves as their reality. While the universities argue whether to admit jazz into their enclave, the schools are more and more embracing the world of pop and rock as well as musical theatre and other world musics as an everyday diet for school children of all ages. In effect, the social organization of musical knowledge in school is itself critical<sup>9</sup>. Bernstein (1971:49) writes, "Classification thus refers to the degree of boundary maintenance between contents" and "where classification is strong, contents are well insulated from each other by strong boundaries". The perception of a music education problem would therefore reside in the apparent dispute over the boundaries which classifies what constitutes acceptable knowledge about music and subsequently what counts as "musician". The notion of conflicting standards and their importance to the definition of social problems has been addressed by Merton (1982:52) when he writes,

It follows logically and is found empirically that to the extent that these standards differ among social positions and groups in a society, the same circumstances will be variously evaluated as being at odds with the standards held by some and as

consistent with the standards held by others. Thus, one group's problem will be another group's asset.

Merton (1982:64) defines a social problem as "the substantial, unwanted discrepancies between what exists in a society and what a functionally significant collectivity within that society seriously (rather than in fantasy) wants to exist". Thus, as long as significant groups have divergent opinions as to what ought to count as a legitimate school music education, the obvious first place to search for an explanation as to why certain people may hold certain kinds of school music knowledge as more appropriate than others is in the training institutions for music teachers.

Merton (1982:47) suggests that in examining the sociological notion of a social problem, there are at least eight connected questions. Of these, two seem particularly important for this analysis. The first is the social perception of the social problem and the second is the question of the judges of social problems. Since music education students seem to be engulfed in this social world where there is apparently some indications of a social problem worthy of serious investigation, it is to their own identity construction that this analysis turns.

The Faculty of Music at the University of Western Ontario claims that its goal for its music teacher preparation programme is to "make musicians first, teachers second". This motto is widely known and widely promulgated in the Faculty of Music. One needs to ask, in light of the apparent gulf developing between music education as practised in the universities and music education as practised in the lower schools, just what meanings are taken into music education students' understanding of "musician" and what role this plays in their interaction with each other, with faculty and outsiders as they come to develop an "identity" as a "musician".

This is a sociological problem. It is a problem that is highlighted by the "new sociology of education" in Britain where the studies by Hargreaves (1967) Social relations in a Secondary School and by Lacey (1970) Hightown Grammar together with the essays in M.F.D. Young (1971) Knowledge and Control began a movement to examine the "givens" of the more structuralists' accounts of schooling. The case-study research lineage of schooling continued with works by Sharp and Green (1975), Willis (1977), Woods (1979), Ball (1981), Burgess (1983), Pollard (1985) and Waterhouse (forthcoming). These studies have in common, an approach to the field that views the meanings developed by those under study as important. This study is an examination of a view of self; in self<sup>o</sup> where the meanings and knowledge of "musician" become the foundation for the development of an identity as an overwhelming or "master status" (Hughes, 1945). The study is grounded in the perspectives and methods of sociology to attempt to answer questions raised in the discipline of music education.

Before proceeding further, a discussion about the preparation of music teachers in Canadian universities is in order.

## Music Teacher Education

To begin with, the professional education of a music teacher in Canada is typically the divided responsibility of a university music group (Faculty, School, Department, Division, etc.) and a university education group (Faculty, School,

Department, Division, etc.). The balance of power between these groups varies widely in Canada from almost total control of the music teacher programme by the music group in some universities and in contrast, to the almost total control of the music teacher programme by the education group in other universities<sup>11</sup>. These variations are usually seen by casual observers more as political arrangements rather than ideological ones. However, the balance of the disciplines of music and educational studies is typically viewed critically by both sides and charges of "poor teacher but good musician" or "poor musician but good teacher" are hurled back and forth between the academic units in the university. The music education students, as will be seen, have their own views as to the appropriate arrangement and emphasis of their studies, but they too, lack any consensus.

Because of the jurisdictional variations among Canadian universities, the preparation of a music specialist in Canada cannot be easily described. While there is the semblance of a uniform programme of studies with the inclusion of courses in musicology, theory, performance and a variety of elective things within the house of music (Schmidt, 1986, 1989), there are a large variety of teacher preparation delivery systems for the music specialist. These variations are largely jurisdictional within the university political make-up. They do, however consist of an otherwise unprecedented involvement of the academic unit (music) with the more usual mandate of education faculties. Some universities, such as the University of Alberta, house the music teacher education program in the Faculty of Education with academic input from the Music Faculty<sup>12</sup> in much the same way as any other discipline. The other extreme shows examples where the Music Faculty has taken over the entire process of teacher education. In some institutions the political arrangement is further confused because members of faculty hold joint appointments in both the music division and the

education division, thus wearing one hat at one time and yet hat another at another time. Leading music educators in the USA have written positions such as this,

The final criterion for judging the effectiveness of a program of music education is its effect on the musical behaviour of students.(Leonhard & House, 1972:412)

Whether this judgment can be substantiated remains to be seen. But it is this ideal, among others<sup>13</sup> that has led many Schools of Music to challenge the more traditional and obvious mandates of Education Faculties.

It is this variety of preparation models that might lead an observer to the conclusion that, although the teacher-education curriculum is a relatively stable entity, the mode of delivery is sufficiently varied to create differences in "product". While these various models have been established by the different universities for the preparation of the music specialist, the interactional processes that the students encounter in the differing models of curricular presentation and Faculty affiliation must be presumed to have some effect on the "product" of this educational process. This notion for discovering differences in outcome within schooling institutions has been the subject of considerable sociological research. Robert Merton (1982:34) writes,

The study of school systems is also seen as strategic for discovering the circumstances in which organizations designed for a particular purpose give rise to unpremeditated effects. Here the originating question asks: What are the unintended consequences of the present "rational", organizational structure of schools for the socialization of the child?



Simply because the jurisdictional authority of music education programs in Canada is so dissimilar one from another, the outcomes of the degree pattern for the student could reasonably be presumed to be dissimilar. It is the intent here to argue that the social outcomes of the preparation of the music specialist can best be illuminated from a stance that recognizes the "product" of teacher education as a social product as well as a knowledge or skill-based product. One might legitimately ask who these graduates are as well as just what they know. Set more systematically in the sociological tradition one would ask, how do multiple-group affiliations and reference-group interactions raise partisan conflicts in the role-identity<sup>14</sup> or social action of the graduates? Are there social action consequences of varying degrees of consistency in the multiple role-identities of the graduates? If the graduates of one university have differing views of the process or content of music education then these too can be suggested, perhaps, to be outcomes of the program of studies through which the student has been processed. Whether any of these consequences can be shown to be unpremeditated remains the topic for empirical enquiry elsewhere. Further, an investigation of the apparent non-consensus among music education students might be useful.

If the curriculum content is substantively similar in most all the institutions (Schmidt, 1986, 1989), the educational "product" must surely be differentiated not by what the student knows, but by who he is or thinks himself to be. That is to say, that the social product may be just as, if not more, important than the knowledge product that results from the music teacher education curriculum. This is more than Bernstein's (1971:50) "Framing" where the frame refers to "the degree of control teacher and pupil possess over the selection, organization and pacing of knowledge transmitted and received in the pedagogical relationship", this is a question of

identity, of meaning associated with a master status as "musician" and how that influences the processes of social interaction.

During the last 35 years, the Faculties of Music in Canada have grown and systematically, following their American counterparts lead, taken over an ever increasingly large part of the teacher education process for music-education specialists. This remains an anomaly in Canada because no other university faculties in school curricular areas (eg. English, Mathematics, Science) have shown such substantial interest to have established themselves within the education discipline as distinct from their otherwise assumed academic expertise. There has been little investigation as to the importance of setting or context for the development of an identity as teacher, but Faculties of Music have been successful in convincing many university administrations that music and the study and teaching of music is somehow "special" and is dependant upon special knowledge and skills that are only available in a Faculty of Music setting. From the literature we have this researcher's own early observations recorded.

It is a curious development that music is perhaps the only subject whose practitioners at the university level typically have meddled in the mandate of education faculties. One sees journal advertisements that proudly claim that music education courses are taught almost exclusively by music faculty. By comparison, science faculties are content to get on with things scientific.(Roberts, 1986:32)

As a result, faculty are hired in music faculties to teach education subjects, most particularly methods, and the results are that unique and often baffling staffing

arrangements are made to accommodate this political arrangement. In the USA the situation has been described as follows,

The administrative structure for music teacher education exhibits considerable variation among institutions. Members of the music teacher education faculty may hold appointments in the department of music, in the department of education, or joint appointments between music and education.(Leonhard, 1982:237)

As this process in the drift of responsibilities from the typical mandate of education faculties continues, it takes no great amount of imagination to conclude that some groups of people representing the one side come into conflict with groups from the other side. This view seems to correspond with the view of students and has been expressed by one American faculty member as follows,

The freshman I know are not primarily motivated by the desire to become a teacher five years later, even if they have settled on teaching as a career plan. They are concerned about getting first chair in the band, about gaining the respect of their peers and studio teachers by spending more time in the practice room than any other freshman...(Meske, 1982:263)

The results of such programme decisions in the USA have been described by one of its most noteworthy university music educators,

Existing programs are, without exception, hybrids, the result of a kind of random cross-fertilization of three related programs from different types of institutions - the conservatory, the liberal arts college, and the teachers college or normal school. The result has not been a beautiful flower which sometimes results from hybridization but an overgrown thicket which pleases nobody, not the musician, nor the humanist, not the educator.(Leonhard, 1982:245)

Leonhard continues,

As a result of a long series of compromises, the present music teacher education program results in a human product whom the applied music specialist considers less than adequate as a performer, whom the musicologist considers deficient as a musical scholar, whom the theorist views as lacking in basic musical skills, and whom the school administrator considers unprepared to relate music to the total school program. The graduate himself is placed in the unenviable position of having tried to please everybody and having pleased nobody.(1982:245)

This description of music education programmes may apply equally well to the student in the Canadian scene of music teacher preparation and as a result, appears to be the basis for considerable unrest between these various factions negotiating over the jurisdictional authority as well as the students. It has been suggested however, that when music faculties have control of teacher preparation programs, the product becomes defined solely in musical terms. Sidnell (1981:175) has stated as follows,

I think most [music] education is based on the house of music knowledge, which has many rooms. We talk about rhythm, melody, harmony, form, and colour, but we do so without reference to "people".

Thus it is clear that the first obvious anomaly is that music teachers may be typically much more concerned about "being a musician" than a science teacher is concerned about "being a scientist". Thus it is apparent that science teaching can be viewed as informed by science studies but that music teaching may often be viewed as a function of a musician. Thus the teacher's identity may become one of "master

status" as "musician". One cannot just borrow the knowledge about music as one might in science, one must, rather, be a "musician". The following excerpt from the official "Calendar of the University of Western Ontario may serve to illustrate this point,

Every prospective student must perform an audition on the principal instrument for members of the Music faculty. (1987-88:178)<sup>15</sup>

Before graduation, all students who elect a four-year honours program must reach a minimum of the Associate level in performance in their applied area. (1987-88:187)

In fact in practice, school music teachers appear to wear different hats according to what they are presently engaged in at any given time, sometimes clearly as teachers but often just as clearly as performing musicians. It is ultimately to this issue that this research turns. To understand what "being a musician" means to these students and how and why they negotiate this status will be examined in detail and a theoretical basis for these processes will be proposed.

### Previous Relevant Studies in Music and Music Education

Music teacher education in Canadian universities has not been the subject of any major research activity. What little relevant research there has been comes from the United States and, as often is the case, the implications of USA studies are often taken for granted in Canada<sup>16</sup>. This American research seems in general to investigate the curriculum (Schmidt, 1986, 1989) or the types of variation between the programmes offered at various colleges and universities.

The most thoroughly comprehensive gathering of statistical data concerning music students themselves, however, was prepared by Casey (1986) in his investigation of the profile of undergraduates at Northwestern University in the USA. He gathered data on attitude, demographics, self-concept and personal orientation. His study is perhaps more in the tradition of a "marketing research" model designed to give the institution facts that could be used to sustain the institution's level of student recruitment. Casey set out specifically to determine the nature of the students who attended Northwestern University with the intent to provide the university with data from which the university could market its "products" to the most advantage to those groups of students who were shown to comprise the majority of registration as well as to target other possible groups of potential students. His intent was never to add to the generalizability of knowledge about music students. He concludes his abstract for example with the following comment, "Given the chance to select a college once again, this student would again elect to attend Northwestern"(p.iv). Casey examined the concerns of the institution, largely enrolment retention, and it offers, therefore, as such little by way of investigation or conclusion into the students' concerns or theoretical development about the meanings they construct about being music students in the institution or the processes of becoming a "musician" inside the institution. His work is apparently largely atheoretical and also only probes within a single institution which provides no data for comparative analysis. This is not intended to sling arrows at Casey's research, for it accomplished what it set out to do, but it cannot inform this research as to perspectives, meanings and theory.

Two studies which come closer to searching for a student perspective in music faculties are by Kadushin (1969) and L'Roy (1983). Kadushin investigated the

professional self-concept of music students at Julliard and at the Manhattan School of Music. Methodologically this study was confined to questionnaires which were designed to find the things that made music students consider themselves music professionals. He concludes,

Many students do not even attempt to face the stress of becoming a concert or performing artist, and many shift to teaching as their major ultimate or permanent career in music. The meaning of a professional self-concept to a future music teacher might be quite different from its meaning to a student who intends to become a performer. (Kadushin, 1969:398)

While Kadushin discusses "meaning", he does so from a posture that suggests that these meanings are simple pre-defined or pre-existing categories and that students adopt a meaning along with the already envisaged "self-concept" to which he makes reference. He writes (:390), "we take professional or occupational self-concept to mean simply that noun which a person usually applies to himself when asked the standard identifying question of modern society, "what do you do?". Thus his quest seems to be centred upon a fixed notion of self identification to a known and pre-defined occupational status. He does not seek to explain what processes account for the development of such a "self-concept" nor does he challenge the nature of a "self-concept" as a social construct for students. This research, on the other hand, is more interested in a Meadean self as process. Furthermore, Kadushin studied the socialization of students who were studying to become "professional" performers and not school music teachers.

L'Roy (1983) is the first major study which sets out for itself the task of looking beyond the paper and pencil tests for the gathering of data about music students for analysis. While the plan was noble, the inclusion of a paper and pencil test in the

data gathering procedures led the researcher to report almost exclusively from the statistical data gathered and thus the study, for all its promise, left the research community with little in the way of explanation<sup>18</sup> or understanding of the social processes in the construction of reality within the social world of music students. Her purpose as stated was to investigate the development of occupational identity in undergraduate music education majors using a "symbolic interactionist" framework (1983:i). Although she interviewed 28 volunteer students, the "focused" interviews provide only minor comment to support the statistical findings from the paper and pencil test. Together with her doctoral advisor, L'Roy reports the findings of her study as follows,

Professional performer was ranked first most often, but music educator and musician tied as the second most frequently ranked label. In all three areas the choice for professional performer increased rather than decreased from the freshman to the senior year, indicating a lessening of commitment to music education. (Froelich & L'Roy, 1985:68)

Her findings result in a form of quantitative descriptive ethnography of the music school at North Texas State University. The researcher settled upon predetermined categories, which are claimed to be the result of some initial interviews which opened with the question "What do you plan to be when you graduate" (L'Roy, 1983:70). Once these few interviews provided the initial categories, L'Roy reverted to the questionnaire. This precluded any further development or modification in meanings which may possibly have been discovered with other more open qualitative techniques. The questionnaire which resulted solicits ideas from students about how they view the profession that one presumes they have indicated a preference for. Thus question 18 reads, "In your opinion how do good music teachers gauge the effectiveness of their work?"<sup>19</sup> (p.200) It is therefore a hypothetical account of an abstract future. She claims a qualitative framework yet reports almost exclusively on



her quantitative data. Nevertheless, this is a ground breaking study and for the first time the principles of symbolic interactionism were applied, albeit weakly, to the university music education community, an approach she traces back to White (1967) who suggested the appropriateness of a symbolic interactionist framework for the investigation into the professional role and status of music teachers in the USA. The implied promise that this research would look further into the previously unexamined processes of interaction by offering a conceptual framework for defining social phenomena to be investigated and then suggesting more appropriate qualitative methodologies for exploring them is left untapped. The conclusions that are reached appear largely to come from the statistical data alone and the day to day construction of realities are left unexamined and unexplained. One can only review the object of research through its written reporting and considering the stated objectives of this study, the reliance upon statistical reporting may have been more the result of university political pressure than the researcher may have initially planned considering her advisor's apparent advocacy of participant observation as a research method for music education<sup>20</sup>.

The single most relevant and important work that precedes this study is that by Henry Kingsbury (1984) titled "Music as a Cultural System: Structure and Process in an American Conservatory". Kingsbury, like this researcher, is a professor of music in a North American university. He, too, began to question the processes of music as a cultural system within the university music department. His is an ethnomusicological study that begins with essentially the same general questions as this study. He writes,

I strove to observe every social interaction in terms of the question, "what is at issue here?," to see what was being

negotiated, decided, clarified, altered, maintained -- what is in contention, in doubt. (p.30)

Later he adds,

This is a study of the learning, the teaching, and the evaluating of music, which is to say that it is a study of issues, and by "issues" I specifically mean things which are perceived and/or acted on as issues, as being at issue, by the people under study, namely the students, teachers, and administrators at the conservatory. (p.33)

Ultimately, however, Kingsbury focused his enquiry on the cultural artifact commonly called "music". He writes,

my goal is to describe the meaning of various notions of music and non-music, and to examine the social process which manifests and reproduces these notions. (p.48)

His effort is decidedly ethnomusical and not a direct unpacking of the interpersonal account of the social processes. Nevertheless, in his report, he deals substantially with issues such as "talent", "competition" and the reified category of "music". His analysis, however, remains entrenched within the ethnomusicological tradition and although obliquely reflects on the position taken in this present analysis, it proceeds towards other goals. His results, he suggests, might not be totally acceptable to the musician and because this present theoretical generation may be likewise suspect, it is offered for comparison. Kingsbury writes,

It should not be glossed over that among many musicians this thesis -- with its insistence that "classical music be understood as an aspect of social process necessarily including an awareness of power and authority -- will in all probability be seen as something of a sacrilege if not an absurdity, as perverting or polluting the music as it is, or as they might say, the music on its own terms. (p.87-8)

Furthermore, the conservatory that provided the location for this research differs from this present research in that the principal objective of the conservatory is to produce performing musicians and this varies substantially from the goal of becoming a teacher of music<sup>21</sup>.

Kingsbury chose participant observation as a "mock student" as his principal research methodology. As such however, he is quick to add the following,

I warn that this may be the closest thing in this dissertation to raw data, since one of the salient experiences I had as a fieldworker was that of consciously choosing which "data" to include and which to exclude from my field notes (one cannot record everything), thus introducing analysis to the very process of collecting data.(p.8)

Thus the presentations of interpersonal interactions provide further "raw" data for this present study since the data in this study were collected mainly by interview. Substantial reference will be made to Kingsbury throughout this analysis, which is focused most directly on the actors rather than the music.

### Identity and the Music education Student

Kingsbury, like this report, is principally qualitative and analytical in nature as opposed to the more quantitative and descriptive studies by L’Roy and Kadushin. In fact, the object of this study might be stated as follows: to develop a substantive grounded theory concerning the identity negotiation of student music teachers in the Canadian university system. "Substantive" meaning here as from Glaser and Strauss (1967:32) the development of a theory for a "substantive, or empirical, area of sociological enquiry, such as patient care, race relations, professional education,

delinquency, or research organizations". One may be permitted a suggestion as to how this may be useful to formal theory development but this present effort constrains itself to the substantive area of the student music teacher.

For the purposes of this analysis, the concept of "identity" is derived from essentially two pivotal sociological works in the symbolic interaction tradition, McCall and Simmons (1978) Identities and Interaction and John Lofland (1969) Deviance and Identity. The development of the concept of "identity" begins with considerations in McCall and Simmons (1978:65) where they write that role-identity,

may be defined as the character and the role that an individual devises for himself as an occupant of a particular social position. More intuitively, such a role-identity is his imaginative view of himself as he likes to think of himself being and acting as an occupant of that position.

They further claim that if a person does not claim "some social identity, other people will force one upon him". (p.70). People are able to claim many different role-identities for themselves while taking into consideration the support they can gain from Others for these various role-identities. But McCall and Simmons develop their thesis to suggest that these many role-identities are "themselves not equally important to the individual but differ in their prominence" (p.80). They write that "those identities most in need of support are more likely to be acted upon, for we strive always to legitimate our conceptions of ourselves"(p.81). This has serious implications for this study since, as will be amply demonstrated, the role-identity as a "musician" is seen by the students as needing substantial support to ensure an adequate legitimation. These role-identities are similar to what Lofland (1969:123)

refers to as "categories", i.e. "kinds of people". Because people have many of these role-identities or categories, these begin to cluster with the result that,

For public purposes and on occasion of face-to-face engagement, one of the clustered categories is singled out and treated as the most important and significant feature of the person or persons being dealt with.(p.124)

This, suggests Lofland (1969:124), becomes a "pivotal category" that defines "who this person is". Thus acts which are consistent with the pivotal category become more than acts, they become the people themselves. Thus in the deviant field, acts of murder, rape and robbery are perpetrated by murderers, rapists and burglars. In this study, acts of music-making are seen as consistent with people who are "musicians". In the music education literature there is a growing awareness of this relationship between music and identity. David Elliott (1989b:12) writes about musicians as follows, "They fear that outsiders will not understand and respect them. In short, because music is, in essence, something that people make or do, a people's music is something that they are, both during and after the making of music and the experiencing of music". Lofland (1969:127) writes that "whatever is taken as pivotal is Actor - is his essential nature or core being". This is the person's "identity". The notion that a pivotal category can be viewed by Person and Other as Person's essential being is most strongly associated with deviant types. While Person may be a carpenter, father, brother, Knight of the Round Table and golfer, these role-identities are most strongly obvious in situated social action. One seldom perceives the carpenter as a father or the golfer as the husband (hence the well-known "golf widow"). But when a pivotal category takes such pre-eminence as it appears to do so often in deviance, the murderer is seen as a murder regardless of the situation as golfer, father, brother or Knight of the Round Table. It is as if all other possible role-

identities or social categories are pushed by Others so far into the background<sup>22</sup> that only the one single "identity" is visible. Hargreaves (1976:204) writes that "instead of the act being just part of the person, the deviant act comes to engulf the person". Thus the person comes to view himself as "centrally, pivotally, essentially or 'really' deviant". For the music education student in the music school, the desire to be viewed so centrally, pivotally, essentially or 'really' a "musician" is the major concern of this thesis. Much of "identity" is considered by many sociologists to be imputed. Hargreaves, Hester & Mellor (1975:140) write that "the identity the teacher imputes to the pupil has important consequences for the analysis of teacher-pupil interaction and the development of pupil career". As in this case, the imputation by Others and Self-as-Other of a "musician identity" has these same important consequences. This notion of imputation derives from the labelling perspective<sup>23</sup> and it is discussed in detail as it relates to this analysis at the conclusion of this thesis.

## Notes for Chapter One

1. Music education students in this study are those students who have elected some university's official teacher training program for music teachers. It defines the "sociological sub-group" specifically from other "university music" students who may be taking "performance" programmes or "theory & composition. The nature of the boundaries about these groups and sub-groups are worked out in some detail later in the thesis.

2. There is an implied assumption here that these students do come to develop this "identity". It is somewhat the dilemma of the rat chasing its tail here as the study actually presents the data and analysis in a way to demonstrate that this assumption results from the analysis and is not a precursor to it.

3. "Identity" in this study is developed fully later and derives from the writings of McCall & Simmons (1978) and Lofland (1969).

4. Interaction is taken here in the fullest Symbolic interactionist's and Meadean sense of both with "others" and with "self".

5. It is not a moot point here that the education of a music teacher is described as a "process" rather than in different words. This study takes the position that the educational "product", in light of a rather significant consensus in university curricula for music teacher candidates (Schmidt, 1986, 1989) is not as critical as the social construction of an "identity". It might be more simply stated perhaps as "not what you know but who you are".

6. Becker's concept of "ideal pupil" perhaps.

7. Of course the question may not be a simple matter of "goal" and may be much more significantly tied to what counts as "music" altogether. Again we must refer back to the sociology of knowledge (see MFD Young (1971). Here there are clear signs of a hierarchy of music knowledge.

8. This movement stems worldwide from Canadian R. Murray Schafer and in England from Paynter and Dennis among others.

9. MFD Young (1971:2) writes for example that "certain fundamental features of educators' world which are taken for granted, such as what counts as educational knowledge, and how it is made available, become objects of enquiry" See Vulliamy (1977) for a thorough examination of music as a case study as organized school knowledge.

10. from G.H. Mead, 1934

11. It is also a historical legacy of university power and control as music schools began to appear within institutions of higher learning and laid a claim on teacher education in music.

12. The use of the designation Faculty of Music, Music Faculty and School of Music are the most common designates in Canada. They are used as synonymous terms here. The members of faculty, ie. the professors, are so designated so as to avoid confusion between the people and the institution.

13. The most salient of these others is the apparent relationship between the teacher and the knowledge of music as something someone "is" rather than something that someone "borrows".

14. from McCall & Simmons (1978:65) Identities and Interactions. "Role-identity may be defined as the character and the role that an individual devises for himself as an occupant of a particular social position. More intuitively, such a role-identity is his imaginative view of himself as he likes to think of himself being and acting as an occupant of that position".

15. see Hopper (1971:94) "A system with a centralized and standardized selection process reinforced by a sponsorship ideology is similar to a "Talent Show" in which the participants display their talent to a panel of judges who are assumed to have good judgement".

16. This is not always seen as such a "good" idea. McKellar (1985:30) writes about the study by Bidy & Posterske (1985), "I am pleased to bring to your attention that this is a Canadian study of Canadian youth. It is not an American study from which we must assume similarities. In my opinion, too frequently, decisions are made that affect Canadian curriculum based on research carried out in societies that do not necessarily precisely reflect the Canadian character".

17. There is no hidden agenda here with respect to the status of the musician as a professional. However, as will be discussed later in more detail, it is difficult to make a substantial case for the performing musician as a "professional" within the more regnant sociological literature on professions except for the very liberal construct that Kadushin uses in his study of "What do you do?"

18. See Weber and the tradition of "Verstehen" or cultural understanding. e.g. Broom & Selznick (1963).

19. It is perhaps very informative to this present study to note that in response to this particular question "pupils' progress and self-evaluation" rated highest and "principal's evaluation and music supervisor's evaluation" rated lowest as sources of evaluative information.

20. Froelich-Rainbow, Hildegard (1984) Systematische Beobachtung als Methode musikpädagogischer Unterrichtsforschung. Mainz: Schott



21. refer to Kadushin above for a previous examination of the "conservatory" position

22. see Goffman (1959)

23. see Plummer (1979) for a rather complete review and proposal for an understanding of this perspective.

# Section A

The Social Construction of Reality in the  
World of Music Education

# Methodology

As early as 1973, Ellis Melton in his efforts to provide some predictor variables for music students concluded that he had discovered little of practical significance for the selection or guidance of music majors. He went on, however, to recommend that future researchers look to structured interviews as predictors of specialization, rather than relying on paper and pencil tests.

Even the most thorough examination of the subsequent literature shows no move away from the deluge of quantitative studies. It may be in fact, that not until the publication of Lundquist's 1986 agenda for sociomusical research in higher education have any substantially new directions been pointed out to the music education community. Lundquist (1986:53) concludes that the focus of sociomusical research becomes the identification of common structures and processes underlying the relationships between human beings and music phenomena and identifying the principles by means of which they interact.

The occasional effort at dealing with these issues appears in the literature about this time (L'Roy, 1983) (Krueger, 1985) but the agenda is still largely untapped for its rich potential. Lundquist (1986:54) writes,

The range of pancultural issues include: the identification or selection of musicians, behaviour of musicians, socialization or enculturation of musicians, social stratification and music, music preference..."

Many of these issues have been attempted with limited fruitful results because the research initiatives have unsuccessfully tried to quantify many of the things much better explained from a qualitative perspective. As described earlier, L'Roy (1983) fell into this trap with her research. Although her approach was claimed to be built from symbolic interactionism and qualitative methodologies, she reports essentially on the quantified data generated in her questionnaire thereby ignoring the possibility of theorizing from the potentially more useful qualitative data. So we know from her study that only 16% of the band and string majors claimed that music education was the **only** satisfying field for them (1983:133). But what social forces may have shaped these opinions or if in fact her respondents even understood the meanings she attempted to convey through the questionnaire is left unquestioned and subsequently unanswered.

The disappointing results of this and other studies can perhaps be largely attributed to the distrust and ignorance of other more appropriate methodologies employed within the greater education research community. In fact, when this research project was described to the head of music education at one of the research sites, the response was that while he had no objection to this style of research, it was not to be confused with the notion that he accepted the "qualitative approach". He stated that in his American graduate work, he had taken some psychology courses and

that they had convinced him that such an approach was inappropriate although at the same time he admitted total ignorance of the method.

Although the research community in music education has largely ignored the potential of qualitative research, other academic disciplines such as sociology have developed long and distinguished traditions with this style of research methodology. The rigor of such an approach depends substantially on the ability of the researcher to suspend belief in his own "knowledge". Schutz (1964:27) writes, "The sociologist is the disinterested scientific onlooker of the social world". It is here that the methodological roots lie to examine what Schutz (1964:27) calls the "cultural pattern of group life". Within this tradition lies the potential for the gathering and analysis of meanings. How the social actors (our music education students) borrow, create and use meanings for the operation of day to day interactional processes.

### The University Musician World

Music education students view themselves as belonging to a specific social group on campus. Depending upon the particular university in this study, they typically refer to themselves as "music students" and belonging to the "Faculty", "School" or "Department". They display a sense of belonging and group spirit. Most of their time is spent together as a group of music students and they share many of the same pressures and experiences both academically and musically. The strongest perceived commonality, and often a source of irritation and tension among the members of this group, appears to be tied to the music-making demands in the music school. For the purposes of this analysis, the term "music school" will provide the global boundaries<sup>1</sup> for the inclusion of those students studying music and about whom this study concerns

itself. Music students appear to develop a strong sense of isolation from the rest of the campus and most seem to focus their attention to the social action within the music school. It appears to them as an "insider group". They often refer to others who pass through the music school or drop into their cafeteria as "outsiders". The musician's world seems contained within the walls of the music school and as Becker (1973:103) reports, a musician "conceives of success as movement through a hierarchy of available jobs". On campus, the institution provides all these "jobs" and students, as musicians, see their own success partly in relation to an established hierarchy of these academically organized "jobs", i.e. the university bands and choirs and orchestras. Community membership appears quite strong and students report that membership is virtually granted instantly during the ceremony during the "frosh week"<sup>2</sup> activities. It is a form of social ritual<sup>3</sup> which confers music student status on the newcomers and these students report that once so inducted, they immediately are able to join in the activities as "insiders"<sup>4</sup>. At UWO, the students often talk about the physical separation of the music school from the rest of the campus. Physically, the music school is at the bottom of a rather steep hill and all other campus activities have come to be known to take place "up-the-hill". This comes to be symbolically referent to all activities outside the confines of the music school as well as literally to activities that really do take place on the main part of the campus.

The notion of group is used here because it will be shown to be important that there is a central or core membership as well as a periphery membership among the music students. Despite the tendency of modern sociology to abandon the acknowledgement of simple structures, the students in this research have a strong sense of social bonding in the basic ways described above. The students perceive a

sense of Toennies' "Gemeinschaft" (1887), a strong sense of belonging with both benefits and obligations without a necessary commitment to agreement.

Aside from the more obvious "structural" group boundaries, i.e. those bound to official university structures such as academic year, academic major, applied major, or assigned ensemble, this study takes as its construct the notion that "community" is a *symbolic* structure where the participants perceive the "reality and efficacy of the community's boundary - and, therefore, of the community itself - [dependent] upon its symbolic construction and embellishment" ... "Community is that entity to which one belongs, greater than kinship but more immediately than the abstraction we call 'society'. It is the arena in which people acquire their most fundamental and most substantial experience of social life outside the confines of the home" (Cohen 1985:15).

There are several other sub-groups which have an importance to this analysis. Some of these sub-groups are structurally bounded such as the students specifically under investigation here, the music education majors. These are the students in the music school who have indicated, at least formally, that they wish to become school music teachers. The other important sub-group structurally bounded is the group of students referred to as the "performance major". Other less structurally bounded sub-groups appear to be based around academic year, instrumental major and particular performing ensembles. Of course, there are sub-group formations that are of no immediate importance to this analysis but it is perhaps worth mentioning that the music school is a complex group of students with many varying sub-groups with overlapping boundaries, both structurally and symbolically.

The music school can be perceived as a social world having a variety of pushes and pulls, a variety of actors, a variety of settings, a variety of outcomes. Descriptive studies such as Casey (1986) provide quantitative data on almost every possible parameter imaginable for these variables just enumerated, but after digesting every fact, every chart of analysis, one is left with the feeling that one is no closer to an understanding of the social dynamic of the students than one was before. Any comment concerning the interaction among the peoples of the music school both within and without is missing.

The obvious answer to discovering anything about this social world must come from elsewhere. Whyte (1955:357) came to this conclusion about 35 years ago when he writes,

It was a long time before I realized that I could explain Cornerville better through telling the stories of those individuals and groups than I could in any other way.

It comes as little surprise that from these early sociological investigations a tradition has developed from which field strategies can be selected with confidence and assurance. There is no longer doubt that the legitimacy of this approach brings us closer to an understanding of what drives a society. The following excerpt concludes the argument.

It is argued that meaning is derived from social interaction, that subjective meanings are a legitimate focus for study and that naturalistic research must be conducted in social context. (Crossley & Vulliamy, 1984:194)



## Genealogy of this study

The methodological genealogy of this study is long and secure. It stretches from the American "community studies" such as Whyte (1955) and Becker et al.(1961) as well as Becker, Geer and Hughes' study of university life (1968). The lineage continues through the schooling case studies in the U.K. by such researchers as Hargreaves (1967), Lacey (1970), Sharp and Green (1975), Woods (1979), Ball (1981), and Burgess (1983), Pollard (1985) and Waterhouse (forthcoming). In the United States both L'Roy (1983) and Krueger (1985) have added to the direction specifically in music education, albeit largely in name only. Of most significance is the study by Kingsbury (1984). The study has taken from these earlier schooling studies its core direction about which Sharp & Green (1975:3) write<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, without wishing to engage in essentialist debates over nomenclature, what seems to be held in common by all of them are, first, their common heritage in German Idealism, developed in social science in the work of G.H. Mead, M. Weber and A. Schutz, and second, their substantive concern with the problem of subjective meaning as a basic for an understanding of the social world.

## General design of project

The general design of this research is qualitative. Aside from other arguments it is contended that,

present measurement devices are not valid because they represent the imposition of numerical procedures that are external both to the observable social world empirically described by sociologists and to the "conceptualizations" based upon these descriptions.(Cicourel, 1964:2)

The basic approach was to examine the on-going and developing social life among the music education students in the Canadian University system. In this way, the present study is similar to both the perspective and methodological practice employed by the researchers responsible for The Boys in White. The authors report,

we did bring to our study of medical students the idea that their conduct, whatever it may be, would be a product of their interaction with each other when faced with the day-to-day problems of medical school.(Becker et al., 1961:11)

The view taken here is from within, that is from the actors' point of reference. The study examines the academic lives of music education students during their time on campus. It is not even a global look at music students, but specifically those students who have indicated their goal to become, albeit in some instances only officially, teachers of music in the Canadian schooling system. This is consistent with other similar studies in which the perspective of the student has been taken in supersession to other sub-groups in the same society such as faculty or administration.

We did not concentrate equally on all participants but made the student our central concern and studied other aspects of the organization as they impinged on the student...(Becker et al., 1961:21)

In fact in this study, because the group of students which is being studied is an officially designated group among several academic groupings of music students, it is important to emphasize that it is only the perspective of the music education major that is being examined<sup>6</sup>. In most cases this group forms the official majority of music students and one could presume from that, that theirs would be the dominant culture. That it is not is to some extent the fascination that this sub-group of the college music community holds for this researcher.

The methodology was conceived in a way to allow for both discovery and the development of a grounded theory<sup>7</sup> for the explanation of the social processes in the music school. The principal data collection strategy was the unstructured interview. The object was to discover what was going on and not to try to test for the frequency of pre-determined ideas about the operation of the society.(Lofland, 1971:76)

Although this will be discussed at length later, suffice it to say that there was an attempt made to conceive of the interview chain as a continuous event rather than a series of isolated information gathering opportunities. Glaser and Strauss (1967:75) write,

At the beginning of the research, interviews usually consist of open-ended conversations during which respondents are allowed to talk with no imposed limitations of time. Often the researcher sits back and listens while the respondents tell their stories. Later, when interviews and observations are directed by the emerging theory, he can ask direct questions bearing on his categories.

The notion of the discovery of grounded theory during the actual on-going data collection is fundamental to this approach.<sup>8</sup>

In participant observation, interviews are typically open-ended, as opposed to closed-ended....as such, the method, when appropriately employed, entails a continuous movement between emerging conceptualizations of reality and empirical observations. Theory and method combine to allow the simultaneous generation and verification of theory.(Denzin, 1978:183)

It is through this process that the grounded theoretical categories can be discovered and tested until gradually their properties sublimate into more concrete descriptions of the categories and the categories become "saturated". Through comparisons they are verified both within the principal population as well as externally<sup>9</sup> (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It must be stressed that the entire design was deliberately unstructured in advance in order to maximize the opportunities for both discovery and verification of the emerging theoretical propositions.(Denzin, 1978:184)

A method of enquiry was needed to solicit deep-seated feelings, meanings, definitions and beliefs from the students, which in at least one instance, brought the interviewee to tears<sup>10</sup> with her realization that she saw herself as less competent as a "musician" than she wished. It was this experience that led this researcher to believe that the interviews were penetrating enough to seek deep seated constructions of what the students considered their "identity" to be. It was armed with this experience that this researcher entered the full body of this investigation, perhaps with some timidity, perhaps with some fear. But reference should be made to the following with respect to aspects of the solicited realities.

the skilled interviewer...can obtain information that the subject would probably not reveal under any other circumstances. The reason why such information may be difficult to obtain is that it usually contains negative aspects of the self or negative feelings toward others.(Borg & Gall, 1963:212)

At the very best, it is to be noted that the investigation is limited to the sub-group of the university music school identifiable as the music education students. Nevertheless, one builds a picture of the macrocosmic world in which this sub-group exists. This view is perhaps captured through tinted lenses because the perception of this reality is constructed by a sub-group within the music school that operates somewhat with its own meanings. This is a typical model of field investigations and was the operative model in the following.

...I was building up the structure and functioning of the community through intensive examination of some of its parts - in action. I was relating the parts together through observing events between groups and between group leaders and members of the larger institutional structures (Becker et al., 1968:2)

It must be stressed that the view is from within. It is not the typical music education study of curriculum (Schmidt, 1986, 1989) which shows what ought to be done or the typical study of attitudes which attempts to discover what courses graduates liked or disliked or which parts of their training they thought most prepared them to teach (Krueger, 1985). This is a study which presumes to look inside the social world to discover the forces that impact on the students and subsequently generate the processes of interaction based upon the realities acted upon as such by members of the music school. If we are to understand what it is that the students are doing, it falls on the researcher to learn the reality of the students and construct theories from their perspective. Becker(1968:2) and his colleagues state it thus,

If we do not see it as they do - as a dense network of social relationships, institutional demands and constraints, and temporally connected contingencies - we will not be able to understand what they do.

Zelditch (1962:576) calls the interviewing process the "most efficient and hence best form" for gathering data about "institutionalised norms and statuses" and the interview as "adequate with precautions and efficient" for "incidents and histories". The best strategy for gathering data concerning "incidents and histories" is participant observation which Zelditch describes as the "prototype and best form"<sup>6</sup>. But as one tries to inquire in the interviews about the reality as witnessed while among the subjects of the study, the boundaries between these methodological approaches tend to dissolve. Probes are made about observed events and one looks for examples of situations related in the interviews. It is, of course, this very observation that strengthens this study. Since each kind of data collection strategy produces a different kind of information, as the strategies can effectively be combined the researcher is able to gain confidence in the reliability and validity of the data. When each data collection strategy provides opportunities to support the categories and developing linkages (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973:110), each, in turn, can be used to generate specific kinds of data which help unpack the interpretive obstacles of meanings in social interaction. Documents such as the student newsletters point out ideas and problems that students are having in their society. It is here that Lofland's (1971:54) "If all else fails" finds its expression. Into print are brought truly those things to which Lofland asks, "What are the things over which they fret, show irritation, desperation, and the like?" This process continues until the analytical categories are fully saturated but as Glaser and Strauss (1967:64) write, making the theoretically sensitive judgment about

saturation is never precise. Their guidelines for the close of the investigation with confidence are as follows,

when considerable saturation of categories in many groups to the limits of his data has occurred, so that his theory is approaching stable integration and dense development of properties.

There is of course, one real constraint over which there seems to be little control. Burgess (1984:54) makes the point so often ignored in the literature when he writes, "furthermore, there may well be restrictions of time and money". The data collection for this analysis consumed nearly 18 months and has required more than 42,000 miles of air travel. All of this has a price, both financial and temporal. It would perhaps enhance the study if several researchers could have taken part in more sites with more students over a longer period of time. But even with one researcher, when the messages and observations leave the interviewer with the sense that there is no new information here, and that the categories are saturated, the research task is nearing completion. It is important to reiterate that the goal here is not to generate an accurate and perfect description of an area but as Glaser and Strauss (1967:30) write, "to develop a theory that accounts for much of the relevant behaviour".

### Access to the Data collection sites

In one way access was quite easy. The universities are by definition committed to research and it would be inconceivable for an institution to deny access at the most abstract level. Nevertheless, specific populations and systematic administration can

make access difficult when they wish to put up obstacles to discourage entry to their worlds.

Once the formality of the required ethics releases for research on human subjects had been obtained from the researcher's own university, letters were sent to the Deans of the Faculties selected as probable research sites<sup>12</sup>. Since the only contact with the Deans would be for formal access and since it cannot be taken for granted that access to any particular professorial domain would be implied by the Dean's permission, in each case, a contact person on the music education faculty was named in the letter for access addressed to each Dean<sup>13</sup>. This accomplished the goal of gaining access through the administrative superior while at the same time, moving the organizational detail of the research to the member of faculty closest to the student population that was to be studied.

It is perhaps worth mentioning that this researcher is well known in the university music education community through his recent position for many years as the editor of the Canadian Music Educator, the national scholarly journal for the music education field in Canada<sup>14</sup>. Whether this had any impact on the ease of access will never be known but access to all sites was easily accomplished.

In addition, the principal site for the investigation was the institution at which the researcher did both Bachelor and Master degrees in music education. Because most all the faculty members were teaching at this institution at that time as well, there were still many personal and professional contacts within the faculty. Still it had been nearly 15 years since this researcher had been a student at the institution so that there was no advantage nor disadvantage with respect to the student population and any



overt associations with the faculty during the time on that campus were kept as discreet as possible so as not to compromise the students' perception of the disinterested researcher model<sup>15</sup>.

Formal access to the institution must be totally disassociated in practice from access to the population. While it is true that without permission to be officially on site, contact with the student population would be impossible. Official sanction cannot guarantee access to the students' meanings nor, in fact, achieve a position whereby the researcher is in any social position to interact with the students in a meaningful manner. This is discussed at some length later with respect to the "testing of the researcher" for inclusion in the students' world.

Access to specific lectures for observation was made through arrangements with individual professors again continuing the plan of higher level sanctions moving down to the people most closely associated with the research population. Burgess (1984:40) also makes the point that it must be questioned as to the extent to which a headteacher (the Dean in this instance) can grant access to the whole of a school site.

### The Question of Data Sampling

The selection of the institutions for study was largely what Burgess (1984:55) describes as "judgement" sampling in that they provided the best possible locations to study the parameters of music education in the field settings. Again the point must be made that this research does not set out as its primary purpose to provide an accurate description of the various communities studied. The basic question of

sampling was answered under the rules set out by Glaser and Strauss (1967:47) for "theoretical sampling". Thus the groups under study were selected for the theoretical purpose to which their data might provide at the appropriate time in the sequence of the investigation in order to provide the necessary comparison groups. Therefore the criteria as set out by Glaser and Strauss (1967:48) are "those of 'theoretical purpose and relevance" - not of structural circumstance. The specific criteria for selection and information about the four locations are based on controlling for optimum similarities and differences in order to enhance the discovery of core categories. The political differences between the University of Alberta (U of A) and the University of Western Ontario (UWO), for example, provide opportunities for maximizing differences<sup>6</sup>. At the U of A, the students register in the Education Faculty and, as such, appear to interact with the members of the Music Department more as "visitors". This contrasts sharply with the perception that students at UWO have concerning their immediate acceptance into the music student community. By comparison, music education students at U of A appear to strive in order to gain social admittance to the music community. The other universities provided opportunities for the collection and analysis of data by minimizing differences. Glaser and Strauss rightly claim the vital importance of this control for the discovery of categories. They write,

The sociologist does not merely look for negative cases bearing on a category (as do others who generate theory); he searches for maximum differences among comparative groups in order to compare them on the basis of as many relevant diversities and similarities in the data he can find. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:56).

At the commencement of the research plan to generate a substantive theory, researchers are advised to generate the categories and their properties by first minimizing differences. The depth of the theoretical sampling refers to the amount of

data collected on a group and on a category according to Glaser and Strauss (1967:69). They advise that,

Theoretical sampling, though, does not require the fullest possible coverage on the whole group except at the very beginning of research when the main categories are emerging - and these tend to emerge very fast.

Thus the most in depth and thoroughly broad-based data collection which yielded the fullest possible coverage was at the first principal site, the University of Western Ontario. The additional sites, the University of Alberta and the University of British Columbia and the second round of interviews at UWO's Faculty of Education provided a more concentrated attempt to saturate the categories that were emerging from the investigative work at UWO.

The issue of when the study should take place was an area of further serious concern. In order to assemble data from several different locations, it was impossible to be at the primary site for the entire duration of the time available for the data collection and it was considered important that, in order to accomplish the goals of the study, the results would have to consider "phase analysis" in addition to the concerns previously outlined.

The distinction between static types and sequences or phases in the analysis of acts refers not to the way the world really is "out there" but to the form of presented analysis. (Lofland, 1971:19)

In the pilot study carried out with the students at Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN), it appeared as though students accomplished entry into the

community of music students quickly. Later it will be shown with reference to the data from UWO that the initial "joining-in" phase is almost immediate but certainly if a "critical moment"<sup>17</sup> in this process could be located in time, it would likely be during the first few days, or minimally weeks of the academic year. It was thus decided to investigate the primary location at the beginning of the semester during September and October. Both the observational phase and interview phase were blended into this time period. The process was helped by the fact that the Faculty of Education begins its academic year a week earlier than the university proper and this enabled the researcher to complete most of the interviews at the Faculty of Education before the students arrived on the main campus and began classes at the Faculty of Music. The collection of data from documents took place before the beginning of the academic semester. Therefore time sampling was accomplished by firstly, the selection of a critical point where observational data could be collected about the present and secondly, by the use of interviews in which information could be obtained about events past and present as well as plans for the future. It is, of course, acknowledged that during the interviews, certain data is collected as reconstructions of reality, that is, as processed memories of events in the past. But it is a recognized criteria for a full understanding of any society to include an account of time which attempts to establish some links between past, present and future.(Denzin, 1978:86)

Within the populations themselves, the selection of interviewees was based on the notion of random sampling. More details relevant to each location are described later. In the case of UWO, the principal site, the Dean of Music selected a random sample of 8 students from each of the four years in the program of the Faculty. He then had letters delivered to these students in which he invited them to participate. Further students consented to an interview as a result of personal contact with the researcher<sup>18</sup>.

These were instances of what Burgess (1984:55) refers to as "opportunistic sampling". It was with these students that specific observed events could be tested and challenged rather than the more general approach taken with the pre-selected interviewees and thereby a more direct beginning to the generation of categories and their properties was enhanced.

In an apparent attempt to present the best face of the Faculty of Music, the Dean was concerned about inviting students from the non-honours stream. This proved in practice to be overcome by the random sampling techniques used for the Faculty of Education as well as the opportunistic sampling measures taken within the Faculty of Music itself.

All interviews were conducted in a way that gave opportunity to each interviewee to participate both as respondent and informant.

### The researcher as observer

Keith Ablow has the happy ability to be involved in events and, at the same time, be witness to them.(Ablow (1987:vii)

Like Kingsbury (1984), this researcher is an insider. At least this supposition can be substantiated if one acknowledges a general "community" of music education which includes both faculty and students and in some instances allowable outsiders to the university altogether. There is no claim to the researcher being an "insider" to the students' world. He is, however, part of the greater university music social world being investigated and as a professor of music education has access to observe many

of these events on a regular and on-going basis and has had this opportunity for some years now. It is impossible under these circumstances to come to the field uncontaminated. The critical issue is to avoid the fallacy of objectivism: that is, the substitution of one's own perspective [the researcher-sociologist] for that of the subjects under study. It has been claimed that too often sociologists enter the field with preconceptions that prevent them from allowing those studied to "tell it as they see it".(Denzin, 1978:10)

Glaser and Strauss (1967:67) however suggest benefits of the "slice of knowledge" provided by the insider when they write,

Through his own experiences, general knowledge of reading, and the stories of others, the sociologist can gain data on other groups that offer useful comparisons. This kind of data can be trusted if the experience was "lived".

and as their final word on this topic (p.252) they write, "the moral of the story is that one should deliberately cultivate such reflections on personal experiences. They suggest that it is perhaps these as much as any others that provide the "springboards to systematic theorizing".

Most of the literature concerns itself with the difficulties of gaining a sufficiently close enough relationship with the field to be able to truly understand what is going on. There are admonishments to the effect that researchers need time to establish themselves in the situation, to learn the language and to determine those things the interviewees would rather not talk about (Becker & Geer, 1957). There is nevertheless one interesting reference to the dangers of becoming too close to the society.

Miller (1952:98) discusses two major problems with what he calls "over-rapport" which confronted him in his study of a local labour union. These are firstly that,

some penetrating lines of inquiry had to be dropped [because] they had given me very significant and delicate information about the internal operation of the local; to question closely their basic attitudes would open up severe conflict areas.

Secondly,

over-rapport had a second limiting effect of greater subtlety. We have been told of situations in which rapport with leaders may mean lack of rapport with rank and file individuals. This situation does not merely mean that rank and file members may be diffident in articulating their grievances to "administration men", which is how the observer, who is friendly to the leaders, may appear to them. The neglected element is what happens to the observer: he first hears about things from the leaders with whom he has rapport; he develops their "set" toward problems; when he talks to rank and filers he readily accepts those of their statements which conform to articulated leadership attitudes, even when these statements are not deeply meaningful to the rank and file members.

Reference has already been made to the fact that contact between this researcher and the members of faculty were kept as discreet as possible. Kingsbury (1984:29) reports an interesting confrontation with a student after the student, as he reports, "saw me introduced by Dean Sullivan to two different faculty members". He concludes "that she was considerably less than enthusiastic about the apparent idea of being an object of inquiry". This researcher, however, did not enter the field under any pretence as a "mock student" as did Kingsbury and perhaps because there was no attempt at deception, there was apparently little redress either.

A dress code was adopted that as much as possible tended to identify the researcher with the student rather than the faculty group. It is a more difficult problem to address the mind-set issue. Schutz (1964:27) writes that the sociologist is disinterested in that "as a scientist he tries to observe, describe and classify the social world as clearly as possible in well-ordered terms in accordance with the scientific ideals of coherence, consistency, and analytical consequence". Reference will be made later to the effect that as a result of observer's perceived meanings being incorporated into questions during the pilot interviews where a schedule was used, that the change to a totally unstructured format tended to allow the respondents the opportunity to format the responses without the influence of the interviewer's meanings.

The usual difficulty of a knowledgeable entry to the society is replaced by the possibility of the researcher being so ensnared within the social world under investigation as not to be able to objectively sever personally established meanings.

This is a particularly dangerous area with respect to definitions and meanings assigned by the students which may not be the same as those of the researcher. Although sometimes the two may agree, it would be a mistake to conclude that this may be assumed as a general principle. Consider the response given by this student to the definition<sup>14</sup> of "honours".<sup>15</sup>

Well I was assuming to do my honours but...ah...

**But what happened?**



I applied to Althouse and got in and I thought I'd better take it because a lot of people didn't get in and since it was difficult I might as well do it.

**What happened to the honours?**

Ah.. it isn't here! It wasn't as it....I was actually borderline case at the school, as far as honours was concerned, and I imagine that I could have got back in, like I wasn't....I was kind of on the borderline, but..

**I don't know what that means.**

Oh, OK, well you have to get 60 in all your music courses or above and an average of 70 and you're allowed a half credit grace in a course and one of the courses I took, an ear-training and sight-singing course in second year, and I got below 60, I got like a 58, and that was fine but it pulled my cumulative average down to about 69. (A9:1/2)

This is a typical "faculty" or official definition for the term "honours". This researcher is fully aware of this definition. It is the way that any faculty member is likely to describe its meaning. This is not however the meaning assigned by all students. Compare this statement about "honours" with the previous example<sup>21</sup>,

I don't know how it's done, but there are people in teacher's college this year that graduated with an honours degree that did not have honours but they were, you know, the only bassoonist around.

**I don't understand the difference, what's an honours degree?**

An honours degree means a lot to, it means another third and fourth year in the faculty getting your lessons for free.(A6:21)

Here is a fundamentally different meaning for the concept of "honours". In fact, this led this interviewee into a completely different direction of conversation than did the response by the first student (A9).

Given the possibility that a solution to this problem can at least to some extent be accomplished, it may be more fruitful to examine the requirements that ought otherwise be required in the field. Miller continues by pointing out that the participant observer relationship requires rapport combined with objectivity. Although this is a complex issue, the sensitization to the potential for bias may succeed in ameliorating the otherwise troublesome relationship. Miller (1952:98) continues,

When rapport does move beyond what is necessary for the study is difficult to decide, for rapport is more than a technique of acceptance. It involves a sensitive understanding of individuals so that one is able to make insightful analyses of behaviour.

It became more and more clear as the field work continued that only an insider could breach the security set up at the boundaries of this society. Aside from the obvious extreme use of jargon in everyday life, a language which would create a barrier to any outsider's attempt to join the community, the observer in this setting was expected to participate musically. It became obvious quickly that any participant observation of this group required many musical skills on the part of the participant. Kingsbury (1984) reports similar problems, his more exacerbated by the pretence of being a student, where his rather greater than average skill in sight-singing class caused him some concerns most particularly with respect to his skewing the progress of the class by providing a better than average model for the students to lean on. The observer role for this researcher was relatively uncomplicated. There is further

discussion of this point with respect to the "entrance-testing" of this researcher into the community he was studying. The conclusion reached was simply that there were musical skills required of the participant in this society which would severely limit the possibilities of the non-insider sociologist attempting an examination of the music school. Thus, if the general principle as summarized by Denzin (1978:186) is followed, and that being,

that observers should not try to present themselves as something they are not and should use to advantage all the personal characteristics they possess to enhance the observational role

then the obvious conclusion must be reached that without the necessary musical skills to compete in the community in general, the non-musically-skilled sociologist would be recognized almost immediately as an outsider and held foreign. This in turn would make it very difficult for the researcher to orient himself within the music school. Schutz (1964:30) writes,

The stranger however, has to face the fact that he lacks any status as a member of the social group he is about to join and is therefore unable to get a starting-point to take his bearings.

It was required of this researcher during the course of this study to sing in choirs, play a variety of instruments in a selection of instrumental courses, conduct various ensembles as well as converse intelligently and legitimately in the jargon of music to answer class questions and to help students with assignments in the same way as they did of each other. This has been recognized as a problem in this type of field work before. Certainly the researchers entering the field to study drug addicts or confined

prison inmates would have similar problems. In the literature the problem is addressed as follows,

Direct participation on the part of the observer in the symbolic world of those under study is also involved. This will often entail learning their language, their rules of etiquette, their eating habits, and their work patterns. Direct participation in the subjects' world is not easy. Learning a new language takes time, and acquiring a knowledge of what nonverbal gestures mean is often difficult. (Denzin, 1978:185)

It is thus that a case must be made for the advantages of insider research. There are of course problems associated with the risk of implied meanings and the transfer of the researcher's concerns into the community being studied, but the advantages in this instance may possibly out way the risks. Becker (1970:22) put it this way,

In particular, it seems to me that, since the subject matter of sociology is the social life in which we are all involved, the ability to make imaginative use of personal experience and the very quality of one's personal experience will be important contributors to one's technical skill.

Becker (1963) studied jazz musicians as "Outsiders" and gathered his material while working as a jazz piano player in the Chicago clubs. Here it was obvious that the information would only be accessible to an insider-performing-musician. In fact, Becker's study of these musicians as "deviants" supplies the pivotal argument for the development of the labelling perspective in this analysis.

Arian (1971) investigated orchestral musicians as a 20 year veteran of the Philadelphia Orchestra.

In both these cases, the data were collected at the same time that these researchers were engaged in the normal carrying out of their jobs as jazz pianist and orchestral member respectively. Their analysis, in both cases, was something that resulted from these activities rather than something contrived to gain access for the explicit purpose of carrying on research.

### Entrance testing of the Researcher

Gaining entrance to the society officially was relatively easy. Points already enumerated outline both the reasons and the procedures taken to accomplish this phase of the field work.

However, gaining access to the students' world went not unchallenged. In fact, it was something that this researcher had not been particularly prepared for. The literature is full of descriptions of the techniques for formal accessibility to societies but there are in comparison relatively few warnings about the conduct of the participant observer while joining a society. Perhaps the most famous and colourful of all is Whyte's (1955:304) description of his experience with Doc after his early attempt to join in the spirit of small talk.

Trying to enter into the spirit of the small talk, I cut loose with a string of obscenities and profanity. The walk came to a momentary halt as they all stopped to look at me in surprise. Doc shook his head and said: "Bill, you're not supposed to talk like that. That doesn't sound like you." I tried to explain that I was only using terms that were common on the street corner.

Doc insisted, however, that I was different and that they wanted me to be that way.

The first challenge went past with relative ease. By attending a frosh week rock concert, it was thought that the experience might provide some experiences that might lead to dialogue in the lobby<sup>22</sup> which in turn might lead to other more fruitful conversations. As well, by mixing with the music students at the concert, which was in itself relatively easy since it took place out-of-doors and all the music students were wearing baby blue T-shirts with "F of M" and "Music" emblazoned on one side and their names on the back, it was hoped to establish contact with a few people who may in the future be recognized and ease the approach inside the music school. There was only one direct challenge when one student asked "whether I belonged to the band or was just hangin' out?" A simple "just hangin' out" seemed to suffice and the matter was dropped. However, this specific encounter did provide examples of both the goals set out above. The student who challenged the presence of the researcher was physically easy to identify being both quite tall and at the same time quite heavy. Fortunately, he was quite often to be found in the central lounge of the Faculty and this provided just enough superficial recognition to allow for an unchallenged presence at the very beginning. Because the Faculty has a large number of post-graduate students, the researcher's age alone did not disqualify him from the assumption that he may belong among the music students. It was there in the main lounge that this researcher met his equivalent of Whyte's Doc, a sponsor. He was a bright and effusive individual who took it upon himself to establish the place of everyone in the greater scheme of things. He seemed to know all of the students, including the incoming students as a result of his volunteer work on the "frosh"<sup>23</sup> committee. It turned out that he was acknowledged by the other students as a good scholar and a fine musician as well. He was active in student politics and although

only in second year, had already began his second term on the F of M Students' Council. He had a rather unusual nickname which everyone knew and in the spirit of that, we will call him "Roller". It was Roller that remarked about the researcher to the assembled students during the first few days; "you are certainly a hip guy". It was also Roller that was responsible for the invitation to choir rehearsal, an event which proved to be quite useful for our relationship since we both are tenors. This allowed us to share music for the rehearsal and strengthened the bonding both musically and socially. Roller was of most use in trying to identify and find students who could provide specifically enlightening points of view on several topics that emerged as the weeks went on.

The importance of the student lounge is undisputed. The main lounge at UWO was the only non-discreet assembly area for the students other than the cafeteria. All the other meeting places in the building were occupied by specific sub-groups, some composed of academic groupings and others with such sub-groups as "smokers" for whom little common area was otherwise available in the music school.

This researcher was from these early days on regularly asked by the students for various subject-specific assistance in a way which was common for the students under themselves. In fact, the way in which the participant observer was treated turned out to be fully compatible with the student-first line of assistance that the music students use for their academic defence system. During this time it was asked of this researcher to assemble various instruments, fix the keys on an oboe, help with several theory assignments as well as regularly solve German language problems for a small group of music students who, it must be surmised, had found the normal student assistance route less than adequate with respect to the solutions needed for German

language study rather than music problems<sup>24</sup>. By the end of the first week, it was generally known by all who frequented the main lobby who this older person was and that he was interviewing students for some sort of research project, but that he appeared to be unconnected to the Faculty and helped whenever asked to do so. Many students began over the course of the first week to recognize the researcher's presence in the lobby and would wave in recognition.

The conclusion reached however, suggests that it would only be feasible to admit a perceived insider to the position of trust that seemed to be established between the participant observer and the students.

One thing that remains a mystery is the lack of concern that so many of the students had in general about the interviews. When this researcher was faced at the beginning of the pilot study with a student who broke down into tears at the responses she felt necessary to make to certain questions, it became an ever increasingly strange puzzlement why so little information passed through the underground communication network. There were, of course, students who attended the interviews for whom little of significance seemed to occur. In fact, after having conducted a few interviews during the pilot study, the researcher openly asked students what they knew about the interviews. The typical response was "nothing" or "not much".

**Have you heard anything about this or talked to anyone about it?**

No, not really.(M1-7:1)



One excerpt from the transcripts notes may be illustrative of this point,

**Tell me what you've heard about this interview before you came?**

Not much actually. People just... well I asked a few people what's this about when I first got it like what's this for and people would say so and so got it too and I'd go to them and I'm just going for an interview. Actually I didn't hear anything. Well we talked at lunch the other day and you told me a bit about it then. But otherwise, if I'd wanted to find out I could have found out the nitty-gritty on everything you asked and what you're like. This place is an amazing gossip centre. It's so small and close knit that's it's like a small town. You can't do anything..(M3-4:20)

His qualifier that he could have found out if he had wanted to was a source of some soul searching for a time. Although there is no direct evidence to suggest otherwise, there is also not much to prove the proposition that, because the interviewer had been accepted into the students' social world, his activities were not suspect nor was the information solicited in the interviews the kind of material from which the students could easily recognize any particular threat. In fact, in the case of the first student interviewed in the pilot series, the student was very likely not to reveal her true feelings to others about the catharsis that actually took place during the interview itself.

Only a few students actually volunteered any comment about the interview. One instance relatively late in the interview schedule after sufficient time had passed to expect the population to be somewhat aware of what was going on, and the fact that it was a more senior student who would have sufficient contacts to establish the nature of the interviews, it provided a good opportunity to check on his expectations.

because I said I'm going to come in here and you're going to go, oh my god when I leave. He's a different one.

**Why, did you have some expectation about this.**

Yea

**Tell me about your expectation? What did you think I was going to do, beside doodle while you're talking?**

I don't know, just ask, kind of the same questions. I figured it would be a little bit more rigid; your questions. Like a little bit more like did you like this, why are you in this, I guess you are kind of asking those questions ..... but it just seems to me more casual and I thought it would be more normal.

**But it doesn't say that does it, on the sheet?**

No, I just kind of glanced at the sheet.

**Why did you come?**

Because I had nothing better to do.(laugh) I don't know I figure I'd give you might want a different perspective. I figured I'd probably be different from the other students. So I didn't mind coming to help you out. Okay,..... I don't know.(M3-3:31/32)

This same student was puzzled by the kind of questions and was led to ask about the status of the interviewer.

Are you a psych prof or a music prof.

...

**Does that matter.**

No, you just seem to be talking to me like a psychologist.(M3-3:29/30)

Although few students appeared to become concerned about the interviews, there was also the student who was looking to please, at least offer the kind of information that he thought the interviewer was searching for. After a request to comment on his view of himself as a student, the following reply was offered.

That's a good question. Generally a good student but maybe this is what you want to get at.(P2:12)

This student was substantially older than most of those interviewed and had already atypically given much time to verbalising his own construction of reality.

it's hard to judge your success there. I mean there's your own perception, your perception of what you think other people think of your performance or playing capabilities and of course how you rate it (P2:13)

There appear to be sufficient grounds on which to build a case that the music school can best be approached by an insider<sup>25</sup>. The most basic obstacle to gaining satisfactory insight into this social world remains the apparent necessity to be a musical performer of some accomplishment. Like all others in the music school, the researcher would be judged on the basis of his ability to "make music". Becker (1963) was a performing musician himself and by virtue of that was able to investigate the culture of the "dance musician". Evidence to support the notion that the music school is composed of insiders will be reported later. By adopting Schutz's position referred to above, the researcher is able to at least minimally reduce the risks of insider study and come as close as possible to unlocking the meanings that the students under study employ.

## The Pilot Study

In order to launch any serious investigation, some detailed exploratory work ought to be undertaken to establish the basic framework into which the study proper can be fitted. There will be technical errors made and some early hypothesized notions can be revised to take account of the emerging data and categories, or in some cases, can be disposed of in their entirety.

For the pilot study, the researcher's own university, Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN) was selected. This was obviously the best available similar community to the main study site and in order to begin a set of interview guidelines were drawn up to direct the interviewees to the main topics that were considered to be important.

Ten subjects were used. These were all of the students in the senior music education course at MUN. To consider this theoretical sampling seems premature. It was, at best, a first look into the possibilities of searching for the most obvious categories of inquiry. In a way, a rehearsal session for the researcher in interviewing technique and the processes of analysis.

No-one refused to participate although the same voluntary procedures were employed as in the rest of the study. There is no way of knowing for sure whether the academic control held by the researcher over this group played a decisive role in their willingness to participate. The notion of academic reprisals for "telling all" or other

sanctions being imposed by Faculty was however to be found in the transcripts at the primary location (UWO).

I didn't actually go up to her and say you know you're not a very good teacher, that wouldn't have done very good things for my mark.(A3:13)

In fact, one graduate described the lack of student action as being the direct result of student fears of reprisals.

**What's been done about it.**

Nothing that I know of.

**Why not?**

I don't know. I'm about the only person I know of that makes waves at that place.

**Why?**

Why? I think everybody is too scared.

**Of what?**

Of the administration and that, they're just too scared to open their mouth or.....

**But what are they scared and what are they afraid of?**

That the faculty could, you know, make them take more courses or they could make their live miserable, which I'm sure they could.(A7:16/17)

Nevertheless, there can be a level of trust established between insider-interviewer and respondent that allows for as much candour as might possibly be desired. Although the students at MUN were instructed that they did not need to use names for

example when discussing events at the music department one student commented during the interview,

for example, (I don't know if I should mention any names but I don't think there is much harm in it) (P8:17)

This student commented after the interview it was at that point that he realised that both he and the interviewer knew exactly about whom he was talking and there seemed to be little point in continuing the pretence that both parties in fact didn't know who the subject of the conversation was.

When the students at MUN had completed the individual interviews, a group review of the interviews was conducted to solicit feed-back from the students as to their reaction to the questions and the technique in general. The over-whelming opinion from the students was that all students should be required to attend such an interview and that many had been awake for many hours at night trying yet to answer to their own satisfaction some of the questions posed during the interviews.

The idea of a written scale test such as used by L'Roy (1983), although considered, was abandoned when it became obvious by examining the interview transcripts that, not only was the same superficial data, in comparison to a more rich interpretive data, available in the transcripts but also the meanings and relative importance of these meanings for the data collected by L'Roy in her study. It could, in fact, be argued that additionally this information offered contextualized meanings, i.e. derived from and rooted in the students own construction of the social world rather than that of an omniscient observer and since the goal of the study was to

produce grounded theory rather than test for its validity, and since the development of grounded theory depends upon such evidence, it seemed inappropriate to pursue the paper and pencil tests further. Furthermore, the written scale produces a static point in the theory development process because at the point the questionnaires are completed, as in the case of L’Roy, the analysis must adopt these meanings as given rather than continue to develop and refine the meanings through continuous checking and comparing available in a more qualitative approach. This argument is also well supported in the literature,

Fixed-choice questions supply the respondent with highly structured clues about their purpose and answers expected. The ‘forced’ character of the responses severely restricts the possibility that the actor’s perception of the items will be problematic.(Cicourel, 1964:111)

A thorough review of the interview transcripts led to a decision to seek further for new directions and additional categories. There was evidence of these same "clues" suggested by Cicourel to be found in the transcripts and every effort was taken to diminish any possible "insider" bias. It was important to solicit the meanings from the students rather than to provide hints at how they may perceive things. If people act on the basis of their interpretations or meanings, it becomes essential to get at their own construction of meanings in order to fully explain the social actions that result. (Manis & Meltzer, 1978:8)

In order to as fully as possible remove "insider" bias, and to provide the greatest possibility for the discovery of meaningful categories, categories that both fit and work, the interview style was changed to a fully unstructured model. If the issues that are important to the subjects can be solicited without clues as to their meanings, then

the researcher has the chance to come closer to an understanding of the social world under study. Support can be found in the literature,

the standard approach to interviewing is demonstrably inappropriate for and inadequate to the study of the central questions in the social and behavioural sciences, namely, how individuals perceive, organize, give meaning to, and express their understandings of themselves, their experiences, and their worlds.(Mishler, 1986:ix)

The approach to the rest of the study was to include as much participant observation as the time allowed. It was to interview students in an as unstructured a model as possible within the confines of soliciting information that related to the general goal of the study and insider-bias was identified and acknowledged for the potential problem that it might become.

### The research sites

The pilot study was conducted at Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN). The principal site for the study was the University of Western Ontario (UWO) in London, Ontario. Further data were collected at the University of Alberta (U of A) in Edmonton and a further data collection round was conducted at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver. A single case-study will always raise questions as to how typical the subjects of the research are. Countering such a criticism, Spindler (1982:8) argues that,

An in-depth study that gives accurate knowledge of one setting not markedly dissimilar from other relevant settings is likely to be generalizable in substantial degree to those other settings...it is better to have in-depth, accurate knowledge of



one setting than superficial and possibly skewed or misleading information about isolated relationships in many settings.

Neither of these positions accounts for the position taken by this researcher from Glaser and Strauss. The accounts are not generated here with the intent of providing an accurate description or "typical" account, nor would the verification model applied to various other similar or dissimilar university settings be appropriate to explain the process undertaken here. To review the position briefly, the main data collection and point of analysis was the widest and broadest, that being at UWO. The other sites provided opportunities to examine developing theory in light of the comparative method by offering data with both maximal and minimal differences. Thus the development of theory was enhanced rather than the issues commonly referred to as the representativeness of the sample taking precedent.

UWO has the largest music education program in Canada. It is generally well respected and has a nation-wide reputation as, if not the leading school, certainly one of the better universities for the study of music education. It is an established school and has offered the Bachelor of Music degree in music education in substantially the same form since the mid- 1960's. The programme of study and the philosophical underpinnings do not appear to this researcher to have changed substantially since the introduction of the program more than 20 years ago. All of this is to say that it is an established school with a history of established cultural patterns among the students, the faculty and the administration.

The programme in music education is principally a four year honours program which leads to graduation with a Bachelor of Music, Honours Music Education degree. From this point, the graduates apply to and attend the Faculty of Education

for an additional year of "teacher-training". It is also possible to apply to the Faculty of Education after the completion of the three-year Bachelor of Musical Arts degree. This three year programme tends to be perceived by the students to be the dumping ground for students removed from the honours program.<sup>25</sup>

The University of Alberta has a completely different political arrangement for the training of music teachers. Application and registration is principally done through the Faculty of Education only where the program contains required courses in music taken at the University's music department. There are also "after-degree" students who elect to complete a performance program in music first before joining the Faculty of Education. Because the students at the University of Alberta seldom actually become socialized into the social world of the Music department, the data collected from these students seem to be exclusionary rather than inclusionary data, that is, it maximizes the differences in the data for the development of the grounded theory. The idea of "inclusionary" and "exclusionary" are used here to represent the basic perception that the students at the U of A have with respect to their apparent inability to become "included" in the social world of the music department. This is in complete opposition to the reports from UWO students who see themselves as instantly accepted into the social world at the UWO Faculty of Music. This instant inclusionary status is consistent with the other universities, MUN and UBC, in this study. Because the U of A students see themselves joining the music community with great difficulty, that is to become "insiders" as music students, the data they provide are based on a forced interactional basis where outsiders are required to attend functions where their presence as outsiders is noted and acknowledged.

The University of British Columbia has a nearly identical programme to that at UWO and is a school and program with a long history and is generally well respected and attended by students on the west coast of Canada. It is a fairly large program and draws most of the students from the UBC Faculty of Music into the UBC Faculty of Education where the teacher-education program is 1 1/2 to 2 years long after first graduation depending on the education stream the student enters.

Because this last named institution represents the final new interview site and is the most similar site in Canada to the UWO experience, except perhaps the University of Toronto, this location provided the opportunity principally for the comparison of data with minimal differences and the further refining of the core categories used to develop the grounded theory.

The programme at MUN is a five-year conjoint degrees programme where the music education students complete both the Bachelor of Music degree and the Bachelor of Music Education degree concurrently. The students' faculty loyalty remains, however, squarely in the School of Music.

## The Interviews

Lofland (1971:75) admonishes researchers to be aware that the structured interview "assumes knowledge of what the important questions are and more importantly, what the main kinds of answers can be." There is therefore much concern for possibilities of interviewer bias particularly as an insider attempting to

discover the actors' meanings. Even in the semi-structured format used for the interviews in the pilot study, there were identifiable "errors" where the interviewer had either led the subjects into meanings or had otherwise made judgments about concerns that the subjects may or may not have had at all.

In the main section of this study, the interview format was changed to be as unstructured as possible. This is at the same time not to be construed that the interviews became merely "friendly chats". There were very specific areas of concern based upon emerging themes, individual concerns and recurrent positions and meanings which were examined in great detail, but as Lofland (1971:76) suggests as a "flexible strategy of discovery". Each interview attempted to examine the student's history with respect to musical background which included garnering as much phenomenological data as possible about the relationships the students had with former music teachers both private and school. Each interview traced the student's history through the process of selecting music, selecting the school where he was studying, the audition process and experiences at the beginning of the university music studies. Later events were traced as appropriate to the stage of the interviewees. Most interviewees offered opinions that related to their views of music education and an exploration of the relationship of music and educator was examined through discussions of the interaction between the students and their applied instrument teachers. This offered the opportunity to explore the importance of the faculty's continued performance and the definitions of musician.

The major difference was perhaps in the formulation of the investigative areas.

In the standard approach differences in how interviewers ask questions are treated as technical problems that can be "solved"

by obeying various rules<sup>26</sup> and prescriptions for question wording and interviewer performance.(Mishler, 1986:52)

In order to avoid as many of these technical errors as possible, the interviewer was guided by a plan that searched for information in specific areas of the community, generally acknowledged by the members of the community to be present and to be understood by the respondents. This approach can be defended by acknowledging that actors organize their knowledge of the social world, not in terms of a scientific system, but rather in terms of the relevance to their actions (Schutz, 1964).

Because each individual creates meanings both on a permanent basis and amends these at the same time in the present, what is viewed for instance, as a source of irritation for any particular student may in fact only be so within the time frame organized within the discussion taking place in the interview. At the beginning of each academic year, the students must revise meanings they transfer into the present from experiences out of the past. By comparing past and present, meanings shift and actions result both from the new information as well as the information filed from before. Thus the connections between events in their social world are all unique. To discuss one student's applied teacher, i.e the instructor for the student's principal performing instrument, leads logically for that student into a discussion of juries, i.e. the final examinations as a performer on the students' principal instrument, and these juries are seen as a source of irritation from the previous year's conclusion. To discuss another student's applied teacher leads logically for that student into a discussion of the teacher-as- performer because a change in applied teachers has raised expectations for the future. It would therefore be impossible to seek the

connections between the elements of their social world with a schedule. Thus each individual interview has many variations from the one before and the one after. Each interview becomes a investigation of how the elements of the students' social world are connected and how meanings are created for them in this maze of events through which they have lived, are living and will live in the future. This point has been raised elsewhere.

In my view such variation is endemic and unavoidable, and the documented failure of technical solutions reveals that the requirement of standardization<sup>27</sup> cannot be fulfilled in practice. (Mishler, 1986:52)

By assuming a posture of interested listener, each interviewee was asked to comment as both a "respondent", that is to provide information about themselves, their own stories and their own thoughts about events and values as well as "informant", where they were asked to comment how they thought others might reply to the same questions.<sup>28</sup>

Often students would offer both information as informant and respondent without any prompting,

he'd sit there and glower at you the whole time. You just really felt on the spot and quite,...this was common to most of the people I would say.

**So you talked to other students about this?**

Oh yes. Most of them. A fair portion felt this way to varying degrees.

**Did you get the feeling that some really liked that?**

Yea, there were always a few.

**What was different about them?**

Well I suppose they had more self-confidence and weren't intimidated easily and that they weren't going to put up with that from this guy.(A2:11)

By offering information as an informer, the interviewer was often able to test how students saw themselves in relation to others<sup>29</sup>. Each student, particularly the more senior students, has a long history of observation in the setting under study. In fact, one student offered the following as her "authority" to comment as informer.

A kind of attitude and .....

**How do you know that?**

How do I know that. I was there. I see it, I felt it.(A6:12/13)

Each comes to make judgments about how his own actions compare to those of others. Since the researcher has neither the capacity nor time to be in all places at once, the only solution to gathering this kind of information is by the use of informants. Zelditch (1962:12) refers to the informer as a "representative respondent" and goes on to add,

The critical issue, therefore, is whether or not the informant can be assumed to have the information that the field worker requires, granting that he asks the proper questions. In many instances he does. In some cases he is an even better source than an enumerator; he either knows better or is less likely to falsify.

The form of the interview became a discourse between the informant and the respondent. Not seldom did students find themselves in internal conflict over answers that at first slipped off their tongues only then to challenge themselves as informant. From the interviewer's perspective, the unstructured interview provides the best opportunity to challenge the responses given by the interviewee (Denzin, 1978:121).

The probing interview can challenge responses in which the students contradict themselves, for example,

**In light of that do you want to reconsider your answer to where you said they weren't interested in performance?**

You see that .....that's a funny question....because in one respect they are...in that it's a means to an end for them. They can gain a lot of things by exploiting these people and using them for their own good.(P3:18/19)

Occasionally, a student would use his response as part of the thinking process and would challenge himself to reconsider his position. A long pause before an answer would often trigger the reconsideration of a response. The conversation which follows shows how the process of interviewing can clarify, both for the interviewer and interviewee, meanings of situations that students find important.

**Did she treat you any differently after you became a music ed student?**

.....No.

**You had to think about that?**

Yea, I had to think about that.

**You're sure?**



She didn't treat me any differently after I became a music ed. student but she treated the one person in our class who was in performance differently from the rest of us. That's why I had to think about that.

**In other words she did treat you differently, but she didn't change.**

Yea, right.(A10:25)

In fact, the interview is jointly constructed by the two parties in that, as Mishler (1986:52) states, both questions and responses are formulated in, developed through and shaped by the discourse between interviewers and respondents. He continues,

an adequate understanding of interviews depends on recognizing how interviewers reformulate questions and how respondents frame answers in terms of their reciprocal understanding as meanings emerge during the course of an interview.

When a schedule is used for interviewing, the interviewer can make adequate notes from which analysis can proceed. The nature of an organized scheduled interview leaves the interviewer with time to notate systematically the responses since the questions have been pre-formulated and are offered for consideration one after another in a prescribed fashion. By using the unstructured interview format, the researcher commits himself to a much greater participant role in the interviewing process. The only possible way to obtain an accurate record of what was said during the interviewing event, an obvious requirement for any systematic analysis and interpretation, is to tape-record the entire conversation. Thus the data base for the analysis becomes the set of interview transcripts, typed verbatim from the interview tapes. This allows for reflection on the dialogues and as Mishler (1986:138) writes,

From transcriptions it becomes clear that meanings of questions and answers are not fixed by nor adequately represented by the interview schedule or by code-category systems. Instead, meanings emerge, develop, are shaped by and in turn shape the discourse.

In this example, the interviewer is attempting to discover the depth of knowledge this first-year student has after only one week in the Faculty. The student appears to have learned the value associated with being placed in a specific band while at the same time is aware of a similar hierarchy in the choral ensembles. Although he is aware of this, he is not a participant in the life of the choral activities and thus, at the moment, pays little attention to them. He offers a definition for "soph" which is technically incorrect but nonetheless relatively suggestive of their senior status. This may suggest some attributes to the way in which students come to understand their social world. Do they develop a general schema to which additional data serve to fill in the details and redefine the situation? While the exact definition escaped this student, the general construct is nevertheless correct. From his comment about being "really competitive", the interviewer was able to test the importance of "competition" for that student.<sup>30</sup>

**Did you audition for band?**

Yea, I wasn't as prepared as I would have liked to have been but it went fairly well. I didn't .....I auditioned for jazz on Wednesday so I didn't get into the orchestra or symphonic band or wind ensemble. I think it's good cause they were tough auditions and it was really competitive but ah..... like I've played basically jazz in high school so I was looking for something more serious and.....If I hadn't auditioned for jazz I would have been in symphonic band.

**Is that good?**

For a 1st year it's alright. Symphonic band seems to be where...if you're not good enough for wind ensemble or orchestra..you get thrown into "Slam Band". they call it. That's what people said.

I guess Faculty Singers are. I don't pay much attention to them.

**What have you heard about the FMS?**

Not very much it's just that only the best go out for faculty singers. There's one choir that you only have to have a voice placement but I don't know which one that is.

**Do you like this competition for entry to the bands.**

It's alright. I'm not very competitive right but it's not.....ah you didn't get into that and I did sort of thing....it's more friendly competition, but from what I've been hearing it's up to the conductor anyways if you knew somebody or something it's..... that's what they were talking about this morning in the lounge.

**Who was?**

Some of the sophs.

**What's a soph?**

Second year I guess and up I guess.(M1-1:11/12)

In the case of this study, some secretarial help was obtained for the task of typing some of the first drafts of the transcriptions. Upon review of these documents to ensure accurate transcription, it was noted that a further benefit to the insider-researcher accrued, that being, the jargon regularly used by members of this society was largely unfamiliar to the typists and as such, could be identified with some accuracy as distinct from the everyday vocabulary known by the typists.

Every study makes judgments as to the size of the sample. Many of these judgments are based on allowances for time or finances. But even within those limitations, the number of subjects representing any given population and the depth to which one goes in soliciting information from these subjects varies widely in case study research. Krueger (1985) for example used a sample of 2 student-teachers in her examination of the influences of hidden curriculum upon the perspectives of music student-teachers. There is little wonder that no generalizable conclusions were reached.

This study attempts to balance depth with breadth. By using several sites for the data collection, an attempt has been made to develop a grounded theory which attempts to account for the actions of music education students. The participant observation at all four sites provided a first-hand glimpse into the social world of the music students and provided clues and questions that were able to be examined more fully in the interviews. Unlike some studies, where the researcher lives in a community under study for extensive periods of time, this researcher elected to gather data through interviews in several sites thus preventing a long period of residency in any one site. Nevertheless, several weeks at the beginning of the fall semester were spent in participant observation and these particular weeks were selected after careful consideration for the importance of the apparent early acceptance into the social world that students in the pilot study had indicated. As previously outlined, at the principal site the largest and hence broadest sample was used, approximately 20% of the total music education population, accepting the limitations of time, the single researcher as investigator and the primary concern for category saturation rather than other concerns. Figure 1 specifies the number of interviews, each lasting between 40 and 90 minutes which were conducted by this researcher.

## Transcript series

MUN (pilot)	10	P
UWO (main site)		
first year students	9	M1
second year students	12	M2
third year students	7	M3
fourth year students	9	M4
fifth year students	12	A
graduating students	12	2A
U of A	9	E
UBC	14	V
Total interviews =	94	

## Transcript Series

Figure 1

The graduating students were the same students identified as the fifth year students. Because the UWO interviews took place in September, the second round

of interviews with these student took place at the end of March after they had completed all but the last in-school session of student-teaching.

Because the first year students cannot be identified as music education students since the program election does not occur until the second year, a random sample of first year students was used. Many were intending to elect music education in second year. An examination of the transcripts revealed that 5 of the 9 first-year interviewees were intending to select music education.<sup>31</sup> This approximates the same percentage of music education majors in the Faculty as a whole.

These series of interviews are not to be seen as static points of reference in the data collection. The entire process of interviewing was developed as an on-going opportunity to expose and refine the analytical categories as the theories began to emerge. The research design did take into consideration the notion of career as a music education student and as such interviews were scheduled with student from all years in the degree program but the issue of cross-sectionality of time is less important in the development of theory as in the validation of it. Glaser and Strauss (1967:207) write,

if first, the analyst decides that his purpose is to generate theory, for then the accuracy of temporal ordering that would be required for verification and description is no longer crucial. He must then proceed to order his variables theoretically.

Each interview event tried to take account of the information that had been made available from previous interviews or from field observations as the various properties of the emerging categories began to develop. In some cases, the interviewer was able

to challenge students with opinions offered in previous interviews. In some instances the information given was the same in each interview. This could then develop a chain of substantiation and allowed for a comparison of meanings attached to a single event.

This is a difficult process to identify in the transcripts because any overt imposition of meanings derived from previous experiences could be misconstrued by the interviewee or taken as "hints" to an acceptable meaning sought by the interviewer. Thus, the only operationally sound opportunity to take account of previous experience was in the challenging of respondents with respect to their own responses.

The most obvious examples of this interview chain are to be found in the 2A series of interviews. Here, the same students were interviewed for a second time. Thus it was possible to bring the transcripts of the first interview to the second and challenge the students with their own former responses.

Although the interview provided the principal data collection device for this study, problems inherent in all types of interviews<sup>32</sup> led this researcher, as well as most others before him, to combine participant observation with the interview strategy. Also, this second round of interviews provided a further opportunity to explore the theoretical categories which had been substantially refined after the interviews at the other sites, since these were the very last interviews to occur.

This researcher attempted to enter the social world as an overt observer. From that the reader can take that this researcher did not pretend to a role as did Kingsbury

(1984). There was no playing a mock-student, nor playing a member of faculty. Although both may have been possibilities, the fact that similar role-playing would not be possible in the other institutions, there seemed little advantage in pretending to one at the principal site. This is what Woods (1979:260) refers to as an "involved" observer. Woods claims also not to have taken on any "accepted" role in the school although he was still very active in the social world under investigation.

This allowed opportunities for the researcher to talk to faculty and students on an equal opportunistic basis, that is, in casual interaction in the students' classes, in the halls and especially in the various lobbies of the Faculty. This provided a view of what Denzin (1978:86) calls the "here and now". It was as much in the main lounge that students gained an understanding of the "generalized other"<sup>33</sup> as they did in any other setting. The physical layout of the Faculty of Music was such that virtually all students passed through this main lobby several times a day. This led to every variety of interaction possible. It was here that the students checked out the interpretations they had made or searched for the group perspective's on the operation of the society.<sup>34</sup> It was here that the majority of the testing of the researcher took place. It was from this vantage point that invitations were given for choir rehearsals, class attendance and active participation in the students' problem solving activities on a day to day basis. It was from data collected in this main lobby that students were challenged in interviews. The benefits of this type of participation are outline in the literature as well.

when the researcher spends much time with the people he studies as they go about their daily activities, {for} he can see the very things which might not be reported in an interview. Further, should he desire to question people about matters they cannot or prefer not to talk about, he is able to point to specific incidents which either force them to face the issue (in the case



of resistance) or make clear what he means (in the case of unfamiliarity). Finally, he can become aware of the full meaning of such hints as are given on subjects people are unwilling to speak opening about and of such inarticulate statements as people are able to make about subjects they cannot clearly formulate, because he frequently knows of these things through his observation and can connect his knowledge with these half- communications.(Becker & Geer, 1957:79)

At the other sites, observation was limited to a week's period early in the year immediately following the time at the UWO. Observation continued at MUN in an informal way throughout the research period and students were questioned about events on an on-going basis. Drop-in conversations with the MUN students provided clues from which directed inquiry often followed.

In addition to the above, the researcher also examined the back issues of the music-student newspaper, the OPUS, at UWO. It was here that some of the frustrations were highlighted and subsequently returned to the present through a more thorough investigation in the interviews. Even materials posted for the benefit of the students found their way into the interview discussions. The impact of rules and memos of conduct and regulation often were perceived as a source of concern among the students.

## Validity

This is a case study of a music school sub-group identified as "music-education-students". In order to gain confidence in the analysis, the method

described allows for triangulation by data source (Denzin, 1978:101) where institutional bias can be identified and challenge the development of theories which may otherwise apply only to one institution. The claim on external validity can be strengthened in that the conclusions for the sub-group category are based neither on a series of cases from one site, nor from one site at all.(Denzin, 1978:196)

Method triangulation can be demonstrated through intensive interviewing as well as participant observation.

The method as outlined provided continuous monitoring of the social world during a critical period of approximately six weeks as the students were returning to the institution and the new students were arriving and joining into the music school's social world on campus. The method sought real life accounts and experiences, thus being contextualized in the present actions rather than just historical accounts which may be better considered reconstructions and derive from a different vantage point, having been already filtered by subsequent action and reaction, in both time and social context. Thus while these reconstructions may be useful, they are different than contextualized perceptions arising at the time of the inquiry.

The process in question here is principally the generation of theory rather than the validation of theory. What deserves attention is the display of the properties of the categories as they unfold and the real-life accounts that generate the specific properties of the categories used in the generation of the theory. And finally, the conveying of credibility of the theoretical framework yet to be discussed.

Finally, the method accepts the responsibility that the engagement in this form of research is in and of itself a process of symbolic interaction<sup>35</sup>.

## Notes for Chapter Two

1. The concept of "boundary" is used in this study most specifically based upon the work of A.P. Cohen (1985) in his Symbolic Construction of Community. Although there are "real" or "structural" group boundaries described herein, the study adopts the position that group, sub-group or community "boundaries" are symbolic and "hinges crucially on consciousness". A full account of this concept is developed as it relates to the boundary definition of what a musician is in this symbolically ordered community.

2. A "frosh" is a first-year student and is a term that is used to abbreviate "freshman". The other typical American terms for other years, i.e. junior, sophomore, and senior are not common on Canadian campuses generally. Rue (1988) in her study of the "Components of Community on the College Campus" suggests that these terms have grown out of use in the USA as well because of the large number of part-time students who cannot be effectively identified as being in any particular year. She further suggests that in order to enhance the awareness of campus community that these terms be reinforced officially to represent a form of status passage. Although left unsaid, this is perhaps in the tradition of Glaser & Strauss (1971) Status Passage. Aldine.

3. see Goffman, E (1967) Interaction Ritual. Aldine

4. It is not clear totally if this ritual confers status as a "music student" only or whether it also plays a part in the provisional conferring of the status of "musician" on the in-coming students. It is very clear on the other hand that students who do not either "qualify" as in the case of MUN students not accepted officially into the music school programme or for those students particularly at UWO where the ritual is very organized who do not attend the ritual, that later acceptance into the "music student group" is significantly more difficult to achieve, for some even impossible.

5. Sharp & Green (1975) attempt to dismiss this theoretical position in their book Education and Social Control but have garnered severe criticism themselves from such as David Hargreaves (1978) "What ever happened to symbolic interactionism?"

6. Although a structural framework may be apparent from the rather "official" nature of the group of students under investigation, the research takes quite firmly the position that "the human scene exhibits special properties in addition to those which might be attributed to nonhuman contexts" (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973:5).

7. see Glaser, B. (1978) Theoretical Sensitivity. Sociology Press.

8. see Kingsbury (1984:8) where he writes, "thus introducing analysis to the very process of collecting data".

9. Schatzman & Strauss (1973:110-113) set their analytical framework around similar strategies which they call "Discovering classes and their linkages". From here, the researcher finds "key linkages" which begin the process of theoretical construction.

10. see Kingsbury (1984:32) who writes, "Such questioning did, occasionally, result in some embarrassment for me and apparently for some 'informants'. On this matter I was certainly at least somewhat guilty of 'once bitten, twice shy' syndrome".

11. for another perspective see Light, Donald (1983) "Surface Data and Deep structure: Observing the Organization of Professional Training" in John Van Maanen (ed.) Qualitative Methodology. London: Sage Publications. And the well-known article by Howard Becker and Blanche Geer (1957) "Participant Observation and Interviewing: A Comparison" Human Organization. XVI/3 p.28-32 offers useful insights as well as McCall & Simmons (1969) Issues in Participant Observation: A text and reader. Addison-Wesley.

12. Since the process of site selection was to be determined by analytic criteria, more universities were "invited" to participate than were actually used. Thus when decisions were made during the analysis to seek a particular site for the solicitation of "data with maximal differences" for example, the most appropriate site was selected from the list of "acceptances". It might be noted for the record that none of the "invitations" to participate was refused.

13. To be perfectly candid, this strategy was adopted because it allowed the Dean in each case to accept the "invitation" to participate knowing full well that nothing would be expected of him personally since it was clear that the other named person would handle the day-to-day matters with the researcher. The researcher knew each of these named colleagues and they also were given an accurate indication of the level of "participation" required from them, which of course was minimal.

14. 1983-1987

15. Kingsbury (1984) was not so lucky and relates a rather awkward incident where it was obvious to him that he got caught. It must be reiterated that Kingsbury chose to enter the Conservatory as a mock-student. This researcher entered as researcher, perhaps what Woods (1979:261) describes as "marginal positions".

16. These "expectations", although defined as "theoretical" sampling, are still judgement calls because there is no way to really predict the kind of data that a site will produce. Nevertheless, the researcher must make some sort of preliminary enquiries to at least assume that the judgement is based on some predictive criteria, whatever that may be for the situation under investigation. Because the political arrangement is so vastly different at U of A from the model at UWO, and because this researcher had visited these universities (and all the others in this study) often in the past, enough personal experience was available to make certain assumptive decisions about the probable nature of the data to be collected. While there may be a real risk of "looking for something" in a site where preconceptions are available, a researcher

must nevertheless make decisions upon the "theoretical" sampling on some criteria or else the project would instantly grind to a halt or wander aimlessly through a series of more "random" sampling which might never address the theoretical concerns that are at issue.

17. It will be demonstrated that students at UWO who did not participate in this "critical" phase were only to gain full membership with great difficulty later and in some instances were never able to fully compensate for their absence during this "critical" stage.

18. This usually happened in the lounge during periods of participant-observation. A typical case would arise when a student would undertake some observed social action which was either bold or unusual and this person would then be asked to come for an interview. Since many interviews originated this way and students were aware that I was interviewing students, students very infrequently refused.

19. This is officially one of the streams at UWO, honours being the 4 year programme and the non-honours stream is a 3 year programme. There are, of course, certain status considerations both about the programmes and the people taking them. It was not uncommon to hear the 3 year programme identified by students as the "dumping" ground for the less able.

20. The convention used in this thesis is to print the researcher's question in **bold type** and the answer in regular. The students' responses are identified as to volume, interview and page number. This first example is Volume "A" for Althouse at UWO, interview 9, page 21. Altogether, more than 4000 pages of interview transcripts are appended to this study. Although no sex specific analysis was undertaken in this study, where possible, the sex of the respondent is indicated in the text by differentiating "he says" or "she says" or similar.

21. This "command" to compare is to be taken seriously by the reader. This thesis takes the position that a recognition of the analysis should develop in the reader through the words of the students quite specifically. Much of the validity of the study depends upon the recognition by the reader of the contextualized accounts by the students themselves rather than reports of a possible omniscient observer.

22. The main lobby of the Faculty of Music at UWO serves as the "lobby" for the recital hall and at the same time as the student "lounge" during the normal day-to-day operations. The students never refer to the "lobby" as other than "Lounge". This point became clear in the interviews where the vocabulary of the question and response was different. The researcher switched to "Lounge".

23. A "frosh" is a "freshman" i.e. a first-year student at the university. The "frosh" committee was a group of senior (years 2-4) students who organized themselves in order to greet the new arrivals to the Faculty of Music at UWO.

24. This researcher spent many years in Germany and speaks German fluently as a result.
25. see Becker, 1963.
26. See Brenner (1985:19) for a particularly detailed list of "rules".
27. for a description of the "Standard Practice" in research interviewing and a critique see chapter 1 in Mishler, E., (1986:9-34).
28. see "Criteria of Goodness" in Zelditch (1962:9).
29. Another typical response as informer-responnent is M2-6:258 where the student says, "I think there are a lot of people that are in music becasue they enjoy playing their instrument but haven't looked at other..." **How do you know that?** "Cause I talk to people".
30. Notice that the "lounge" appears yet again in this excerpt as the location for a student sorting out the world around him.
31. The following are the career goals as offered by members of the first-year class during the interviews: M1-1, mus.ed. ; M1-2, mus.ed.; M1-3 mus.ed.; M1-4 opera star; M1-5 private teaching; M1-6 voice performance; M1-7 composition; M1-8 mus.ed.; M1-9 mus.ed.
32. see Becker & Geer (1957:28-32).
33. see Meltzer (1964) in Manis & Meltzer (1978:24).
34. further evidence of the importance of the lounge is contained in the transcripts with reference to after-concert discussions in the lobby.
35. for a complete list of Denzin's 6 Methodological principles see Denzin (1978:9-14).

## Analytical Reporting

The process of analytical reporting begins with more global concerns of the music school as a symbolic community and how the music education students begin to make sense of their social world. Qualitative data is exceedingly complex and the initial discovery of "classes of things, persons and events and the properties which characterize them" (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973:110) begins the process of unpacking this vast amount of data<sup>1</sup>. The first "class" or "theoretical category" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:70) is in this case what struck the researcher as an apparent student sense of social "belonging". If we were to return to Kadushin's (1969) "professional" definition as "What do you do?" we can see in this situation the students claiming "to be a music student". They have a very clear understanding of their sense of belonging to this social world of the music school and "What they do" is "being a music student". The obvious first place to look for clues as to how the students make sense of their world is to look at the world itself. What "properties" does this social world of music have and further, how are they "linked" (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973:111) to each other and the social actors themselves? It might be an appropriate time to remind the reader that in order to let the data speak for itself rather than provide a potentially more "omniscient observer" account, rather large amounts of interview text is presented in a fashion to let the reader into the process of "interrogating" the data. The reader as well as the writer must have the opportunity to "put to the test whatever ideas may have developed about what the data have to say" (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973:119).



A second reminder might best be posted here and that relates to the notion that Glaser (1978:64) describes as the differentiation between "conceptual specification" and "conceptual definition". This is critical to the development of the theory because as the data speak for themselves, the "specification" about the categories will grow out of the contextualized accounts by the students rather than "by defining it with the assumption that the participants will respond accordingly".

Therefore, having so far outlined the focus of the research as centred upon the social construction of reality by music education students, an indication of the construct world of these students can now be attempted.

### An "Insider" Community

A first important core theoretical category, that is, a category with the most explanatory power (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:70) seems to be the apparent sense that music students have of insulation from the rest of campus life. If individuals or groups of people can be considered as "outsiders" (Becker, 1973), then the reciprocal view must be one as "insider". Becker (1973:1-2) writes,

When a rule<sup>2</sup> is enforced, the person who is supposed to have broken it may be seen as a special kind of person, one who cannot be trusted to live by the rules agreed on by the group. He is regarded as an 'outsider'.

But the person who is thus labelled an outsider may have a different view of the matter.... the rulebreaker may feel his judges are 'outsiders'.

Thus the view of others as outsiders leads a like-minded<sup>3</sup> collection of people, the "group", to consider themselves as "insiders" while the rest of the world is viewed as outside of this "group's boundary"<sup>4</sup>. Although the term enjoys a popular usage, it is employed here in a specific way to identify those groups of students who view themselves as a "group"<sup>5</sup> and that this "group" is perceived as distinct and separate from the rest of the academic activity on campus. In the previous chapter, the world of university music students was described as a "community", largely because it displayed characteristics of groups which students perceived as "insulated" within a geographically separate unit on campus. In fact, the music community on campus fulfils almost entirely the criteria of the "total institution" from Goffman (1961). Goffman points out that every institution has some claim on its members but for the "total institution", their "encompassing or total character is symbolized by the barrier to social intercourse with the outside"(1961:15). Music education students make regular claims to this sense of barrier from outside social interaction. Of Goffman's five rough categories, the music school can best be viewed as type four, i.e. an "institution purportedly established the better to pursue some worklike task" (p.16). Music education students frequently report that their life is totally encompassed within the music school building. While some leave the campus to sleep, and others merely go to their on-campus residences, they report almost universally the breakdown of the independence of "sleep, play and work" (p.17) where they spend so much of their time at the music school with friends from only the music school and where "play" seems hardly possible except on occasion and then typically with others from the music school. Thus most of their day is conducted in the same place with a regular group of others which is stable in composition and subject to the same academic regime and the scheduling for these students is given from officials as imposed, all to the end that as Goffman writes, "the various enforced activities are brought together

into a single rational plan purportedly designed to fulfil the official aims of the institution" (p.17). Of course, the degree of split between the "officials", that being one might suppose, members of the Faculty, and the students as "managed group", is left for the moment until the discovery of significant others is exposed. Of course, it would be incorrect to lead the reader into an impression that there is something sinister in this implied great plan. Music schools are designed specifically for their purpose. Music education students however, are often the victims as well as the heroes of that music school "community". The "community" is composed of music students, faculty and staff and others associated within the general boundaries of the music school and for the purposes of this analysis, the "music school" will be used to identify this social world of those just discussed. Within the music school, other distinct groups form with their own social boundaries and these "sub-groups", such as the music education students, are often seen by the students themselves as "marginal-insiders"<sup>6</sup>, that is, as music students but not always as members with full community privileges. A more complete and detailed description of the sub-group boundaries will follow.

Most music education students, as members of this global campus music community, perceive of their community as a "closed shop". Many music education students bring this experience from high school with them. The nature of music as an extra-curricular activity in high school often creates time conflicts with other events like practices for various athletic teams and students who have more eclectic interests often find that participation in both extra-curricular areas impossible. So choices have to be made. One student at MUN was very bitter about having to abandon dance because of the workload at the university. Although students may have strong interests and perhaps aptitude for a variety of activities, the music program often limits those

activities simply through time demands placed on the students. One student at UWO recounts her high school experiences this way.

I was really interested in sports at that time but at that particular school they're very specialized in high school and that you can't be an athlete and a musician which is really unfortunate. So I ended up giving up a lot of side lines like athletics just to concentrate on music.(M4-1:5)

This of course allows the students participating in the music programme at the high school to become well known to one another and to at least appear to have strong common interests, partly by the obvious participation in the musical events in the school but also by the apparent lack of interest in other activities which the students cannot take advantage of.

In the field notes for this study, a reference can be found that quotes an educational psychologist who taught a special section of music education students at MUN who commented that the students appeared to him as high school students rather than university students. Because these were senior students, this identification with high school seemed unusual. But a closer examination of the transcripts shows that the music department on the university campus is, in fact, often referred to as a high school. A fifth-year student at UWO explains,

Depends on what department they're in I would think. A lot of people in different departments tell me that, you know, music is like a little high school; that's just the rumour going around because everyone does know everybody else. They all have their courses in the same building. You never leave Talbot College or the Music building basically everybody sits in the cafeteria together. You get to know all the people that

way and they feel, I don't know if they feel excluded or what if they don't like it or if they do like it (A6:10)

This self-contained unit on campus, where people with a strong common interest come together, could certainly account for these perceptions. In fact, this sense of "commonalities" was a critical concept for Rue (1988) in describing a campus community. The many shared experiences that members of the class have as well as an unusually high degree of time together certainly make a small class of music education majors an unusual experience for a faculty member who typically teaches substantially larger classes of students who would typically not even be acquainted with more than a couple of others in the class. In fact, this psychology professor mentioned earlier attempted to "break the ice" between the students with this music education class in the same way as he has found useful in any number of his other "typical" classes. The routine is to have each of the students introduce themselves to the person beside them in class and then subsequently have the students introduce their partner in the exercise to the class. But when this activity was suggested to the music education class members, one of the students raised his hand and announced that they, individually, could tell him anything he would like to know about anyone in the class and perhaps it would be a waste of time and that they should proceed with the course.

A fourth-year student at UWO recalls his experience when auditioning to enter a music school.

When I came to Western for my audition it really impressed me as a very personable school and people seemed to be friendly and wanting you to be here or not. Laurier I found to be more like a high school, very small and sort of cliquish

from what I could tell by being there for only a few hours.  
(M4-1:7)

From wherever, students get the impression that the music school is set apart. A student at MUN recalls her early impressions and how they warmed to the music school with time.

**Do you know why you were scared of it?**

I think mainly just because when I didn't know very much about it, it seemed like a really closed door kind of thing. But then once I did learn more about it, found out more about it and talked more about it and understood more about it, it was more accessible than I thought.(P7:3)

Music students also appear themselves to believe that they are seen as a closed community. This reinforces their own perception as a group of "insiders". This MUN student reports on her opinion of an "outsider's" view.

Just because of the impressions that you have of music school when you are not involved with it. When you are outside of it, people think that music school just is a silly club or whatever, you know. That was my impression of it at first, but anyway it turned out that I have enjoyed it but sometimes you have more bigger expectation of what it is than what it really is. (P7:4/5)

On student at UWO even goes so far as to identify those not on the "inside" of this community as a "foreigner".

Very, Ah, people love to talk, love to gossip and love to cut each other up. That sort of thing and any foreigner would automatically turn right off (A6:11/12)

Students appear to construct a strong sense of isolation of their own "symbolic" community from the rest of the university as a whole. The opportunity for music students to contact other students is severely limited. The course work and extras such as rehearsals and practice time as well as an overwhelmingly music related curriculum allows little opportunity for music students to associate either academically or socially with students on the campus in other disciplines. A final year student at UWO puts it this way.

**Who do you meet in music?**

Well music students.

**Nobody else?**

Not really you just don't.

**Why?**

Well all your courses are in music unlike the other people at the university all your courses are in music. And also all your courses are in the two buildings. And you have one course that is "up the hill" as we say so you just didn't get a chance to interact very much like everybody else.(A10:10)

In fact, the apparent isolation gives rise to feelings among some students that they don't belong to the university as a whole at all, but merely to the music school. This

identity with the music school only exaggerates the feeling of belonging to this "closed" community. This same senior at UWO explains further,

Unless you really went out on your own and it's harder to do that when you are in music somehow because the music faculty doesn't associate itself as much with the rest of the university as it should. It quite a closed... they have their own things going on and that's good but they don't associate themselves. When you are in music you don't feel like as much a part of Western as someone in Arts does or in English or anything; economics.(A10:10)

One student in Vancouver even referred to her association in the music school as a "family" and points out that "others" wouldn't understand the conversations "inside" anyway. Students develop this strong sense of belonging and identification with what the music school means to them. This UBC student comments,

I was here, when I taught my first year I actually missed it, I thought I'd be glad to get out of university, but there's something in music that the other departments don't offer, like when you go to other classes and it's like when you go to music department it's like, something like coming home into a family, like you have good rapport with the people, you sort of understand and when you do music, you know the kids, you're on a level that is beyond talking and everyone understands it, and you know they're intellectual enough to know what's going on, like if you're with people and you hear certain things about music you can't right away talk about it cause no one else understands it, but I really like the music department, being part of it.(V11:4)

So how does a student join this "family"? Students report that access to the community is almost instant if they approach it when the door is open. This perception of real temporal limitations for entering the community appear to be borne out by experience. First, however, it should be demonstrated how this acceptance



generally and most easily works at the "right" time, which is during "frosh" week. A "frosh" is a student who is entering the university for the first time and is the UWO (as well as generally understood and used) equivalent for "freshman". A student at MUN recalls her first impressions.

**So what was your first impression then when you've arrived, having been selected?**

I think the first day they had a wine and cheese or something or just an informal get together. So, that was good I got to meet other students and I knew one or two already but not very many. But, my first impression was that everybody was very friendly and it would be no trouble fitting in. Because I seemed to be accepted right away. (P10:3)

At UWO, the in-coming first year students are met by a welcoming committee (party) of older music students, which the "frosh" typically label as "sophs"<sup>7</sup>. More on that point follows. The ritual<sup>8</sup> is well established and consists of a "frosh alert" which amounts to one senior student identifying the "stranger" who then is greeted by the "We love you frosh" song. The important part of the process, however, is that immediately after having been "sung-in", the new student joins forces with the older students to welcome the next in-coming frosh. This instant acceptance into the community has both symbolic and real meanings for students. While at the time it gives them a sense of relief at finding some point of contact in the bigger university arena, it also provides the beginnings of very fast developing peer groups to which comment is forthcoming later. A first year student at UWO tells of the previous week's experience.

**Tell me about frosh week.**

I loved it. As soon as I came in the door, they came up to me and sang < we love you > and I honestly felt that they meant it, like I felt that they meant it because they were all just looking at you. It was a very very warm feeling. And then they did the same for the next person and I joined them, like we had to join them and it was really really nice.

**So from that very moment you sort of belong to them.**

That's right. That's what you feel like. It's very very,....I got shivers up my spine. It's a really good feeling and I felt right at home.(M1-9:9)

It may stretch the point a little but it is nevertheless noteworthy to point out the phrase "right at home" particularly in light of a preceding comment about feeling like a family (V11:4).

This next student sees the other music students as easy to get to know and explains that once having been "greeted" that you just joined in to sing in the next frosh.

Yea, the music people are really easy to get to know. They seem more outgoing like when they greeted you when you came in, They did the frosh alert and they sang to you and it broke the ice right away.

**Then what happened?**

Then you get in that group and you do it to the next frosh that comes in.

**So once you've been greeted you're instantly in?**

Yea, pretty well...(M1-5:7)

Another "frosh" describes her introduction to the music community as "overwhelming" and reports,

**When did you first meet the music crowd?**

Monday. I came into the music building to get my orientation kit and my frosh t-shirt. I was really nervous because I didn't know what to expect and the first thing that happened, I walked in the doors and someone walked up to me, I didn't know what was going on, all these people were singing and learning cheers, and someone said <are you a first year student?> and she screamed at the top of her lungs <frosh alert, frosh alert> and I get carried, physically, into the middle of this circle of people and they sing to me <We love you \*\*\*\*\*>

**In 4 part harmony.**

Yes and of course and they elected one of the second year students to waltz with me through this whole song. So.....then I got my kit and went home and put on my shirt and told my boyfriend, he'd driven up with me, I'd be back after supper and I went to the assembly.

**What did you do immediately after this singing introduction?**

I turned red! and I just stood in the middle and said thanks and then I went to get my kit because another frosh came in. Oh then they took us up to sign up for our auditions for the ensembles. It was overwhelming having all these people there.(M1-8:6/7)

While this introduction creates "instant" community members and these students seems to have been given the key to acceptance into the community, one student explains that the process of really fusing takes more time.

History was neat to see how many people were really in first year. That was amazing. You get used to faces and by

Christmas you know everybody's face and half of the names. You know everybody in first year. With my English, I didn't spend enough time. I think I was the only music student in my class.(M2-3:11)

The strength of this initial acceptance may appear to the reader to be more imaginary than real but students who either missed this entry ritual by choice or because they arrived on campus later in the week explained that they often had trouble breaking into the community. It was as if the door had closed after the "frosh alert". This first year explains her experience after having arrived one day late and having missed the excitement.

**They didn't make you feel welcome?**

Not really, everybody was in tight little groups...

**Already?**

Yea, well I didn't come 'til Tuesday and I think everybody was there on Monday already and Tuesday morning and I came late Tuesday afternoon. And everybody was in their little T-shirts and having fun and I didn't feel comfortable so I left. I tried that another couple of times and did finally meet a couple of people by the end of the week. I tried coming in a few more times and walking around and looking at things and nobody approached me. It sort of surprised me because I thought they'd have key people that would say <<Hi, I'm so and so, come on in>> Yea, in the lobby but I didn't feel comfortable so.....I came in and checked out the pictures of the frosh on the board.(M1-6:8)

This excerpt is even more convincing since it is the report of a first-year student for whom the experience would have been no more than a few days old. Furthermore, everyone appears to be accepted at first the later sorting out of who

belongs in which sub-groups of "I like" I hate" comes somewhat later in the experience of the community. A graduating student recalls her experience coming to university for the first time.

since my roommates were not in music, we didn't do any of the frosh things involved in music and I went with my boyfriend at the time to all of his frosh things at the law school. So I think that put me off on a bad foot.

### **How?**

Because I had already disassociated myself with the people who were beginning, with the people who were in music and they were already clanning together. We're in 1st year, we're the music frosh, we stick together. So I wasn't part of that whatsoever, not knowingly doing that.(A11:8)

It is important to point out that this acceptance into the community, whether instant or developing more slowly, depends upon the "official" status of the student. Only students who have been accepted "officially" by the university into the music school and its programmes are eligible for admittance to the community. A student at MUN explains.

I think so. First year I felt like an outsider.

### **How so?**

I was just doing a couple of courses there and they .... it's such a clique situation that unless you are in there you are not really in there. I got kicked out of practice rooms all the time because I wasn't in the faculty. I don't know... a few times..... I remember one comment by one particular person.....they were having a.....it was in a History class in first year.....they were having a social and somebody said to me, why didn't you go to the social Saturday night? I said well I didn't know anything about it. Well there was a sign up. Where is the sign. In the students room. Well sure I never go in there. And somebody said well ...all the important people go in there.(P1:3)

This student continued her studies and joined "officially" the following year. From that point the community was as available to her all it was to all other "official" comers.

The situation at the University of Alberta is substantially different. Since the music education students register in the Faculty of Education, they lack the prerequisite status for inclusion in the music community, despite having to take many of the same courses with music students and playing in their ensembles and walking the halls with instruments under their arms. All of the music education students at U of A appear to have felt excluded. Some attributed it to their inability to take certain specific courses not offered typically to education students. While this may have some truth, at UWO the courses that students usually mentioned with respect to the common feeling of belonging by students were the history and theory courses. Many of these courses are common to all music education students and music performance students at U of A. This student explains.

Yea I know and it's good now and I'm starting to really think about well what is it that they really do. I'm not really sure, you know what it is actually, I think it's just that maybe as the music department is a small group and it becomes quite a clique you know and as an education student there are so many other things and courses and things I would love to participate with over there that I don't have the room to do so I guess it's just that I feel excluded because I can't, like I can't fit opera workshop into my schedule like I can't do extra things that, I can't take more theory, I can't take more history even though I really would like to I just can't fit it into my schedule.(E2:9/10)

This student from U of A fingers specifically these theory and history courses as the responsible agent in producing this feeling of exclusion.

**And yet even at that point and time you don't feel like you belong over there?**

No, we've, I personally, I can't say we, it's myself, I felt like an outsider because I wasn't in all of the theory courses or in all of the history courses or I was just in a certain few that were chosen by our faculty as being the key to becoming an educator.(E4:9)

The claim that since the education students achieve less than the Bachelor of Music students (those not taking music education) is disputed by this student who also finds it difficult to explain why there was this apparent irregular acceptance of the music education students into the community.

No, but that's the thing, I think a lot of it is because they knew that a lot of us did have the best marks and that, I don't know, I never, the people I met during my years and that I became close too and friends with, were never Bachelor of Music students, they were all education students. I don't know, the thing, that is, I don't know, I tried to be friendly and that, it was, I don't know, it was like they were nice to you and then the next time they saw you they totally ignore you, you know, I don't know.(E5:6)

This same U of A student finds it difficult to explain why the music community should be closed to her when they all share the bond of being "musicians".

Yea, as musicians, I don't know, I think that, I mean, why else don't they get along. Why can't I talk to them, why can't I become friends with one of them. I mean I'm not the one, I'll gladly, I wouldn't mind building a friendship with a

Bachelor of Music, student, but forget it. You know it just hasn't worked, I've tried. I know it's weird.(E5:17)

As will be shown, this student's claim on the title "musician" plays an apparently much larger role in the structuring of the social processes in the music school. To continue, however for the moment with the previous description of the properties of the category of isolation awareness. The total community isolation is explained by this final year student at UWO.

I still think that I enjoy my years with music faculty but now that I'm here [at the Faculty of Education] I realize that I think yes it was time for me to move on, and that I'm you know I'm learning I think. You realize once you get out of the music faculty how narrow it is in there not just I don't mean musically but when you go through with the same people and all you study is music, music and then your extra-curricular, what do you do? You go to concerts, you sing in concerts and you associate with music people (2A3:30)

Students gain admittance to the university music community by "official status". The community is "closed". It is perceived by both insiders and outsiders as "insulated" on campus and members of the community appear to have little interaction with members of the greater academic world. Thus the music students come to see themselves as members of a group with a strong demarkation in both physical and social boundaries.<sup>9</sup>

By way of analytical summary we might conclude thus far that music students construct a very strong "symbolic" community and that becoming a member of this community often results from an organized ritual of status passage (Glaser & Strauss, 1971) where the "outsiders" are admitted into the community by means of this social ritual (most formally organized at UWO) and their "status" changes to one of "insider" as part of the ritual.<sup>10</sup>



## Students' Perceptions of the Nature of their "Community"

Having established that the view of the music school by music students is one of a "closed" community, it is important now to examine the nature that "symbolic" community as music students construct their perception of their world by taking account of certain "outsiders" as well as their own social observations. Becker (1963:80) writes,

Wherever some group of people have a bit of common life with a modicum of isolation from other people, a common corner in society, common problems and perhaps a couple of common enemies, there culture grows.

Rue (1988:136) in her discovery of the factors for the generation of a strong college community identified "tradition" as being important for cultural generation. She explains that "traditions" is to be understood as "how the culture of the community is transmitted and how behaviour is shaped". If music students construct a view of their world as something "special" or specifically identifiable in some particular way, then the strength of the "boundary" may be enhanced. How do music students make sense of their world? Do they have a sense of a "couple of common enemies"? Are there "traditions" that are in "every-day-sense" understandings about what the music community on campus is like?

Music education students report three recurring themes with reference to their community. The **first** is that their parents are often against schooling in music in general because of its apparent lack of occupational security. The **second** theme is

that they see others, both on and off campus, holding the view that the study of music is somehow frivolous and easy, i.e. confined to the fun playing of various instruments. And **thirdly**, they report their own as well as others perceptions of the music community as "weird", "different" or otherwise deviant. Becker (1963:9) writes,

From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an "offender". the deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label.

Becker (1963:14) expands this notion later when he writes,

We must recognize that we cannot know whether a given act will be categorized as deviant until the response of others has occurred. Deviance is not a quality that lies in behaviour itself, but in the interaction between the person who commits an act and those who respond to it.

This is the first instance where the sense of sensitization to the process of societal reaction<sup>11</sup> is apparent. Students are typically aware of these concerns and their subsequent actions surely take into account these perceptions. Thus accounts of perceived deviance from members of the music student community take on a special significance in terms of likely response outcomes. Similarly, accounts of the perception of deviance within the music community attributed to "outsiders" by music students must be seen as important to the nature of interaction within the outside social world and further strengthen the sense of isolation.

Each of these three categories will be examined individually to show how each is portrayed by the students.

## (1) Parental Concern

Students report that their parents express concerns about the study of music most specifically with respect to the nature of worldly status, i.e., low pay, lack of security and lack of "use". These concerns extend even into the education field for many students. One student told this interviewer that his former vice-principal had said teaching was "the last resort for the weak intellect"(M2-6:16). Although most students, but not all, claim that their parents were supportive of their decision to study music (or music education), often they perceived it as mostly being supportive of attending university in general rather than specifically supportive of studying music. A second year UWO student reports his thoughts,

My parents were really supportive. My dad's an architectural engineer and you would think that he would be wanting me to do something that would be a little more sensible like maths, but my parents have always said go to university and do what you want...Maybe being in medicine or engineering seems a little more sensible and going along with society. It seems a little more safe and more prosperous, whereas going into music you're taking a chance.(M2-5:6)

There is a clear message of societal expectation expressed here. Why would "you" think that? Another student's parents fear for the future in this report.

### **So who talked you into university?**

My parents. They're not really into music and they don't see it as having much of a future even though they are supportive,

like paying for lessons but they didn't think that music would be something to earn a living by, just to go to university to get a degree is something even if it is in music.

**So they weren't too impressed. Like on a scale of delight, it would be a 1.**

Well maybe a 2.(M1-7:4)<sup>12</sup>

These are both examples of specific cases by the specific students reporting their own circumstances. However, the generalizability of this perception can be demonstrated by student reports that presume, as informants, that this situation typically applies to all. For example,

I don't know how many parents would recommend that their kids get into music. It seems that most of the people the idea is <become a doctor> you know, I've never, .....There's something about music, about the arts that is looked down upon because it's a second class kind of education (M1-2:15)

From Vancouver there is evidence that this notion has persisted for some time. Whether this student found any significant change in attitude after so many years is left unsaid but his return to the arts at age 35 does amply show that this is not a newly discovered obstacle for students entering music schools in the late 1980's. He reports,

I think my situation is a little different than a lot of music students I went through with, I mean, I didn't go back to university until I was 35. I loved music as a kid but social and parental expectations had said you don't go off and be a musician in 1968 right out of high school; you're going to be a scientist or an engineer or a lawyer or a doctor or something and I went out and did that.(V5:12)

## (2) The "outsider's" view of the study of music

Students report that campus associates typically perceive the study of music as a "bird" course. A "bird" course is one that is generally considered as very easy and without rigour and is a term in common usage in Canadian universities. It is a common usage term on North American campuses. The counter-claim is best defended by the music students by pointing to the number of hours that they are required to put in, the nature of practising, ensemble participation, required concert attendance, as well as class hours. There are various explanations as to why this perception exists but music students appear to defend their position vigorously and regularly to "outsiders". This student was explaining how she might introduce herself "up the hill" at an academic course. The Faculty of Music at UWO is situated in a building on the lower side of a steep hill on the campus grounds and when students say "up the hill" they mean it in the first instance literally, but of course, it soon comes to take on the figurative meaning of something outside the confines of the music building.

### **And what happens when you say you're in music?**

Usually it's "bird course". And then you have to go through the whole thing and say music is not easy and you have just as many and probably twice as many hours as you have... you know.

### **Has that happened often?**

Yes. The whole campus and even off-campus, like meeting people at home, the general opinion seems to be that music is an easy course. I think it's because people see the polished product of what music is and they go to a concert and see this amazing pianist. They don't realise that she practices X-number of hours a day. They hear the final product but they don't know the work that goes into it. (M3-4:14)

The students' claim is universal mis-understanding both on campus and off, both at school and at home. In the residences music students are confronted with roommates who often do not share this understanding about music. This student says,

**Where did you spend your time?**

Back at the residence. My roommate wasn't in music. She was in Social Science.

**What did she think of you being in music.**

She thought it was the easiest course ever. She thought that anyone could do it. I just laughed in her face. She is in Social Science which is all reading right? It's like you don't have any practice times you don't have this and that, you don't have to go to master classes you don't realise what I'm doing. We really got along well but we had lots of conflicts because she didn't understand it. For me some things came easier so that why she thought it was so easy. When there were lots of people her struggling and yet for me, except for theory, things went a lot easier. She didn't understand...(M2-3:8/9)

This same student continues his report of his expectation of others. While his immediate residence colleagues "knew" because of their direct contact with music students, the feeling is still that without this experience, that a general view would persist.

We had a lot of music kids at Westminster last year so they knew what it was like and the other kids would say like <I wouldn't want to be in that program> There's too much to do. I think if they don't know someone who's directly in music then I think they feel that music is a hard course. It's not like science or business and all you're doing is playing your flute all day. You get that attitude like "Go toot your horn". It's

apparently the third hardest faculty at this university beside engineering and nursing.(M2-3:9/10)

The students defend their position vigorously however, another student admits that this view may be more imaginary than real.

**Do they make a comment about the fact that you're in music?**

Not to me, no. You often think that people think things like "Oh you're in music" but I've never had anybody say anything. A lot of people think that music is a lot easier than a lot of other courses and that bothers me.

**How do you know that.**

I just think it. I've never had anybody say to me like <yuck - what are you in music for>.(M2-8:2)

The perception of "outsiders" often reinforces the view that the study of music is limited to the performance on an instrument. No student gave an indication that "outsiders" recognized the non-performance or academic part of the university music programme. The opinion expressed is that the performance on an instrument is easy, at least for those who have chosen to do it, perhaps an implication of an outsider's view of "talent". A second year UWO student explains,

**What's she think of all this music?**

She's very supportive, like she knows how hard it is and that it does take a lot of work, well I don't do as much work as I should but....she realises ...like a lot of people at residence that will joke about it being a bird course and things like that.

**So they joke at it but you think they know better?**

Yea, some do but some are serious when they say like all you've got to do is practice, you've got it so easy.(M2-9:24)

One student who is active in residence politics explains his perception of the view of music study in the residence.

But here I hang out with the residence people. But so many people over there look at music as such as downer. You have no idea how many people over there thought I was in business just because I was president of the council and when I'd tell them I was in music they'd go <Oh, like why>. So I say Why, cause I like it. And they say what are you going to do with it?(M2-6:16)

While these perspectives show opinions and feelings expressed at one point in time, one student reported that as time went on, as the students in the residence began to notice that the music students were never around, that the attitude and understanding about the nature of the programme changed.

**Did you ever compare notes with them as to what it is that you have to do compared to what they have to do?**

Yea. Well I lived in residence the first year and we did a lot of that. And my roommate's in violin performance and performance or she was in the first year. And the attitudes on our floor were not very desirable.....

**Tell me about it?**

Well we were really put down as the music students, the "Artsies".....you know at the beginning of the year that is and

**Put down how, what happened?**

We don't have to do real work all you're doing is playing music is just fun you don't have to work that kind of thing. You



You know people are just really uninformed. And throughout the year when they realized we were never around you know gradually got to have a bit more respect and people said gee how you spend a lot more time over there, what are you doing, and so eventually people started to respect us as students as well but it took a long time you know it's really gross at first.(M4-1:32/33)

### (3) Deviance

Becker (1963) first developed the notion of musicians as deviant in the development of the labelling perspective in sociology. In his "Culture of a Deviant Group" he describes the perception of dance musicians as deviant. He writes,

Though their activities are formally within the law, their culture and way of life are sufficiently bizarre and unconventional for them to be labelled as outsiders by more conventional members of the community. (1963:79)

Becker begins by pointing out that "the musician is conceived of as an artist who possesses a mysterious gift setting him apart from all other people" (p.85). He continues by claiming that musicians are "different from" and "better than" other people and "accordingly ought not to be subject to the control of outsiders in any branch of life" (p.86). Somewhat later he reports an observation from one of his research subjects who says, "You know, the biggest heroes in the music business are the biggest characters. The crazier a guy acts, the greater he is, the more everyone likes him" (p.87). This perception is echoed by the students in this study.

Students comment on the "abnormal" nature of their university life, the fact that they feel "different" or that the others in music were "weird", "odd", or "eccentric". Even academically, the music students feel that their workload places them in an abnormal category. This student comments on the comparison of his program to that of others on campus.

**So you think that the rest of campus has it pretty slack.**

Yes I do. I really do. They lead a normal university life and we in music lead an abnormal.....yea.(A10:35)

Other students comment on why they may have developed their circle of friends and associations. While they typically refer to the fact that they share common courses and must spend substantial amounts of time together as is mandated by the programme, others point to more sinister reasons.

**So you didn't associate with the people much in residence?**

Not much.

**Did they pass comments about the fact that you were music or?**

No, not really. I think they sort of understood because my personality wasn't the same as there's.(M4-4:18/9)

Another student, a music education student at UBC, who tended not to hang around much with the music crowd explains the behaviour in this way,

**So does that mean you didn't hang around with the music crowd much?**

No, I didn't. They were all weird.

**What do you mean they are all weird?**

They are just weird, eccentric people who spend 20 hours a day in practice rooms doing weird things with instruments and not being social human beings. Not social in the aspect as going out dancing and having a beer; social as they are social lepers. I found most of them didn't know how to carry on a conversation.(V4:9/10)

This student recalls early memories of the music school.

**Okay, so they let you in here and you arrived and then what happened?**

Yea, well I didn't like it at all.

**Why not?**

There's a lot of weird people around and

**Do you still think so?**

Yea(M3-3:17/8)

Other students describe people at the music school as "odd"(V4:12) or that the "faculty was always different i.e. weird"(M4-7:16) or "eccentric"(M4-9:46). These are "insiders" viewing other "insiders". There are, of course, perceptions expressed as to how "outsiders" have or are likely to view the music school community. This student comments on questions asked of him by "outsiders".

Well, "Does everybody down there walk around singing to themselves" you know that sort of thing and a lot of people do

and what I'm saying is when people look into that they perceive, or they assume things when I, cause I'm here and I know some of these people, personally or I just know them to see them, I know there's certainly nothing weird about them, they're just going about their business but.

**But they're singing to themselves?**

If that's their business, than that's it and I don't think that's a big deal but it's because I'm used to it or because I see it all the time and I accept that as just something.(M4-3:31/32)

This student returns to this issue later and explains,

Yea, from what I can see, which is very, from a very limited viewpoint, mostly from what I've heard or talking from other people here and away from here, you know in saying that I'm part of the faculty of music, the music program, it's like uhmmmmm, uhmmmmm, it's like ohoooo.

**Ohoooo like what? What's that mean?**

Weird, you know, like we're weird and that's fine and I sort of chuckle to them and if I see that it's a person who is worth talking to or is worth explaining anything to I'll say "Look, you know, we're really not all that weird. I know that we walk around, people walk around singing to themselves and that my piano teacher is a bag lady, she's not but she's a, I know that it might look weird, but it's really not and I know that you know that and." .. Once you know, and people probably realize that, if they think you're on a regular basis and they seldom realize it, and then they realize it and then there are some people that ohoo and I just say "Think whatever you want, because I can't be bothered to talk to you because I know you're not going listen anyway," which is just regular, everyday happenings so...(M4-3:33)

This same student had even created a "scale of social abnormality" by which she was able to sort out the expectations of "outsiders' views" of her community. She says,

Well, not really, eccentric is not, it's not a really strong word but it's not the word I'd like to use. I'd like to use that for my piano teacher because she is eccentric. Most of everyone else is on the scale of social abnormality, they're close to the middle, she's not

**You mean to say that most of the people you see around here are socially centred?**

Not really, not but on the worldwide scale of socially perceived normality and in actual fact anybody that would look in at us from outside, you know, we'd all be on the right end of the scale and or whatever end of the scale is the weird end...(M4-3:30)

It was the interviewer's interpretation and construct from the use of the "scale of social abnormality" to suggest that someone might be "socially centred". Yet another student reports on her experiences with her friends from "up the hill" who came to have lunch with her in the music building cafeteria.

I met the friends that they had made. And there was a big problem there, every time I would bring them down the hill to have lunch with ME, they were quite critical about the people. Now I'm not, ...I've never found myself critical about who's who and who does what but you know, <<oh that person is really weird>> or <<that person is really eccentric>> <<oh those music people are really strange>> from an outsider who knows nothing about music. If we were all sitting in the cafeteria, somebody, some soprano would be belting out a little tune and they'd look and <<oh my goodness....weird>> To me that's normal. So that separated me as well, you know, that my roommates were up the hill.(A11:10)

Becker (1963:100) reports the comments of one of his subjects who says,

I'm glad I'm getting out of the music business, though. I'm getting sick of being around musicians. There's so much ritual and ceremony junk. They have to talk a special language, dress different, and wear a different kind of glasses. And it just doesn't mean a damn thing except "we're different".

It has been amply demonstrated that the music school on the university campus is an exclusive group, an insider community whose members are acutely aware of the special nature of their "closed" community. It has been shown that entrance to this community rests almost solely on the "official" nature of the student's registration within the music school programmes where those attempting to begin by taking a few odd courses are shunned and otherwise excluded from the life of the global campus music community. It has been seen that the view from without is presumed by insiders to be a view of distortion and one of some form of "deviance".

It would nevertheless be incorrect to assume that, once admitted, life progressed upon some egalitarian model where all those admitted to the community were somehow bound together against the "outside" world. While there is a strong sense of University loyalty, where Western grads are always Western grads, life inside the community during the time the students are actually within the confines of that closed community appears to be a never ending contest for recognition as a "musician" despite the official status as insider.

Although there is a generally accepted recognition of a global campus music community, it is important to point out that the students under study here are a sub-group, "officially" identifiable as "music education" students. While this sub-group fits comfortably within the boundaries of the more global community, it is

nevertheless comprised of "marginal-insiders". That is, students who have formal acceptance into the more global community but whose status is nevertheless distinct from a special central sub-group of "performers" within the global social music community. As the accounts unfold in this document, it will become clear how these marginal-insiders must compete for status with this socially elite sub-group of performers. Hargreaves (1975:97) writes concerning the structure of a group as follows,

when we consider group structure, it is the 'heterogeneity' of members that is stressed. In other words it is the structure which differentiates the members from one another. The key notion in this process of differentiation is that members are ranked into a set of hierarchies, by which in certain respects some members are more valued by the group than are other members.

It will be shown that not only are the sub-groups inside this global music community ranked but also, in certain situations, individual members of these sub-groups.

Students who are not "officially" part of the community, such as the music education students at U of A or the part-time students at MUN, tell of physical space denials based solely on their status as "outsiders". Both of these groups have a very real legitimacy within the physical space of the music school but are nevertheless denied access to what "real" music students could expect. First from MUN a student describes her experience during her first year as a part-time music student.

**Sort of put you in your place.**

Yea, sort of put me there. But, I mean, really, the people who were only doing a couple of courses there didn't go into the student's room where they had their lockers or whatever.(P1:3)

At U of A, a music education student explains her perception of the reality for her as intruder into the music department.

It stinks. Our relationship with the music department is that you are coming to our faculty and we are allowing you to take our courses, they do not make us feel like we are doing music with everybody else, it's kind of you're a separate group, stick to yourselves, you're not musicians, you're just educators, trying to be musicians and it takes away a lot of the drive, I found that I needed, in order to make myself go through it because always finding that well I don't have the six or eight hours a day to practice whereas they do, they're in the building probably the whole day taking a theory course, taking their practical courses, taking lessons and the only time they ever really gave us the benefits of being a music student was when we were taking a practical course, we were actually able to get lockers, we were able to instrument, get into practice rooms in the music department and practice (E4:7)



## Notes for Chapter Three

1. More than 4000 pages of interview transcripts accrued from this study as well as several notebooks of field notes and copies of assorted documents.
2. In this study the notion of "rule" refers to the ethnomethodological sense of "rules of everyday life". See Garfinkel, H. (1967) Studies in Ethnomethodology. Prentice Hall and Hammersley, M. (ed) (1983) The Ethnography of Schooling. Nafferton.
3. The notion of like-mindedness with respect to boundaries may be best considered in the light of Anthony Cohen's (1985) construct of community as a "symbolic" construct where a group of people perceive a sense of boundary and this boundary "impinges crucially on consciousness" (p.13). Also it might be useful to add further that Cohen points out that "boundaries perceived by some may be utterly imperceptible to others" thus accounting for a possible strong sense of "symbolic" boundary where no case for structural or geographic boundaries might wished to be claimed.
4. see Sumner (1904) "in-group" and "out-group" in Coser & Rosenberg, Sociological Theory. 4th edition.
5. see Hargreaves (1975:88-89) where he outlines the necessary 5 rules for the identification of a social "group".
6. There is a workable metaphor here of concentric circles like Dante's rings of Hell where music education students seem to be included in the global circle of "music students" or the "community" but excluded from the core sub-group of students who it will be shown to be the official group of "performance majors". This second group most closely resemble what Howard Becker has called the "ideal pupil" from the music school perspective.
7. This is of course "technically" incorrect since a sophomore is specifically a second year student. However these terms are not in common usage in Canada and further the in-coming students would not have had much opportunity to discover the correct usage. Thus it provides an interesting example of how the in-coming students view the apparent "oneness" of the senior students and label them as a group.
8. "Ritual" is used here specifically as "any formal actions following a set pattern which express through symbol a public or shared meaning" (Penguin Dictionary of Sociology, 1984:209). See Goffman (1967) Interaction Ritual. Aldine
9. It might be interesting to develop a rather detailed comparison with religious sects and other self-selected social groups in religious orders for example.

10. Glaser and Strauss (1971:4) point out that when "people go through a passage collectively or in aggregate they may not be aware that they are all going through it together or at least not aware of all aspects of their similar passage". While students at UWO are ritually treated as individuals, that is "sung-in" one at a time, it is obvious from later analysis that they are not aware of all the symbolic aspects of this "acceptance". One major hidden factor revolves around the notion of "commitment" (Becker, 1960:32-40) and most specifically the "side-bets" made for the in-coming student by the "insiders" as they relate to the values of the community. It is in Becker's words, "commitment by default".

11. This analysis will ultimately end up on the doorstep of the labelling perspective in sociology and a key factor in that perspective is taken to be "societal reaction". Since the concept will eventually be developed in some considerable detail, it is left here as students taking account of Others' reactions to Self.

12. This scale of 1 through 10 (best) has become common usage in North America since the rather dubious fame of the Dudley Moore film "10".

## Toward "Musician" Status

Goffman (1967) in his Interaction Ritual, studies the ways in which people manoeuvre to "make points" in everyday interaction. In the search for analytical categories and their properties we turn now more directly to the relationship, that is the linkages between the "community" as socially constructed by the students and the students themselves as they construct a sense of who they are in that community.

Music education students appear to take significant account of what appears to be an implied normative standard of status, largely by accumulating "points". That is, students see the accumulation of status points as a way to generate the authority to claim a social status in the community. The more points one can accumulate, the more secure one's claim on the social status becomes. The status a student enjoys within the community, which is almost exclusively tied to the notion of "musician", a category yet to be discussed, is seen by students to be achieved largely by affiliation to various groups that comprise the music school. There are, in fact, eight major status gaining affiliations which appear to be employed by students within the music school. A typical student strategy is to use these affiliations to "collect" these status points which will allow the student to claim the status as a "musician". These are, for the most part, "official" groups, to which a student can be organizationally tied but are nevertheless often part of the negotiated order of the community. Becker (1963:103) reminds us that "the musician conceives of success as movement through a hierarchy of available jobs". Many of these affiliations can be compared to

academically generated jobs, each with its own place on the hierarchy, thus each provides a different level of point gaining potential. Each is discussed in detail below and this should become clear during that discussion. These are the eight major point gaining opportunity categories:

- (1) academic achievement groups
- (2) the institutional reputation
- (3) type of music associations
- (4) academic year
- (5) applied principal instrument groups
- (6) applied principal instrument teacher studio
- (7) ensemble and ensemble chair
- (8) academic programme

It can easily be seen that these eight major affiliation categories, even without consideration for the many sub-sets of these, criss-cross through the community with the potential for an amazing complexity of negotiation and strategies for point-gaining possibilities. In order to fully understand the dynamics of this community it is necessary to examine each of these eight in turn.

### (1) academic achievement

In comparison to the music-making activities that are always on display as students perform on instruments in the various performing organizations and as well as in classes in the music school, the academic side of campus life is much less obvious. The nature and properties of the "music-maker" will be dealt with in some detail later. A student, individually must compete for marks for the right to continue in the various institutions and their programmes but having achieved the necessary grade level to advance, the extent of the achievement plays a small part in the status

level of the students. Given a situation where all other things were equal, the status obtained by strictly academic measure would be large. However, the situation where all things otherwise are equal seldom appears. At UWO, entrance to the Faculty of Education after the completion of the Bachelor of Music degree is strictly by academic competition and students are fully cognizant of this and react accordingly. This however appears to be more of an issue with graduating students and to some large extent, confined to their concern. The position put forward by Becker, Geer and Hughes (1968) in Making the Grade is fully operational and grade-getting serves as a fundamental force in the operation of the community. Marks are important. Students acknowledge this often but despite general agreement that these academic grades serve an important "academic" or "official" function, students do not see them as contributing substantially to an individual's status, particularly as a "music-maker", within the music school. This can be mostly attributed to the overwhelming visibility of other music activities, albeit academic within the institution. The institution groups students by academic achievement. At UWO, for example, students who do not achieve adequately are taken out of the "honours" program and placed in the "pass" programme. Students removed from the "honours" programme lose significant status in the community. On the other hand, the Dean's Honour list identifies "A" students and the names of students who are able to join this group are generally available through publications. This fourth year UWO student explains.

### **So what happens next?**

What happens next. Well hopefully at the end of this year I will be on the Dean's list. That's my goal for right now. Is to get over eighty and be on the Dean's list. I was so close last year and I know that I was only that close, I want to try a little harder. But that's my short term goal.

### **Why is that important?**

I don't know why it's important, it's just sort of like small step, a small something to work towards..... I ended up being an Ontario scholar in high school, I think this would be sort of the same, similar thing.(M4-4:22/23)

## **(2) The Institutional Reputation**

Canada has no Harvard, Oxford nor Cambridge. While each of the Canadian universities can claim<sup>1</sup>, with some degree of general acceptance, exceptional programmes and/or departments in various academic disciplines, the institutions, at least at the undergraduate level, are basically all recognized as essentially equal. This is not to diminish the edge that certain universities have achieved in certain areas of excellence but simply to point out that all of the universities on average can boast some excellent, good and less good programmes.<sup>2</sup>

The competition for students among the various university music schools in Ontario is strong. Each university has achieved an image that students see as an attempt to sell to them as in-coming students. One student at UWO comments about the nature of the audition and the strictness that seems to pervade the atmosphere for potential students at the University of Toronto.

### **So they must have a lot better student in Toronto then?**

They think they do, I think it's all attitude there. I have friends that go there and as soon as they started their attitude changed.

### **How does it change?**

They think that their better. << We go to Toronto, we're very good and we work very hard, our programs are better, the teachers....they say: the teachers, the voice teachers are no

where near as good as here and the theory programs are no where near as good, that's why we're stricter. > > It's rather ridiculous I think.(M1-6:3)

Students in Ontario are allowed to apply to first-year university at only three different institutions and a central application agency exists to control this. Most music students audition at what appears to be the allowable three institutions. Many gain admittance to all. Some of course do not but often the success rate can be traced to the availability of places for the specific study of any given instrument in any given year. Students commented on such things when discussing their auditions by saying that they got in this year because there were a lot of places for singers this year and if they had auditioned the previous year they might not have been accepted. Nevertheless, a certain propaganda campaign is waged upon the newly arrived students to hype the feelings that they have made the obviously best choice. This first year from UWO explains.

**What was the first thing you did?**

The assembly. We all got together, all the frosh on campus and all the deans and the important people of the university greeted us and told us we were the pick of the crop and try to get up about Western

**Did you believe all that?**

Well, yea I think so. I'd like to think that I'm at the best university. Everybody goes....well when you've got a choice, you pick what you think is the best for you. I guess I did believe them.(M1-8:6)

There is a clear indication from the music education students at UWO that they perceive the performance programme at Toronto as better. Some suggest that the applied teachers are better, others think it has to do with the location, Toronto being the hub of musical Canada in Ontario. Once having selected a university however, there seems to be little opportunity to use institutional status attributes. Graduating students often use these after having been accepted into a graduate programme somewhere. But undergraduates tend to defend their present institution rather than give points to the competition.

### (3) Type of Music associations

What counts for "music" in this community is very important. So important, in fact, that it will be dealt with in detail later in the discussion. Here it must suffice to point out that status is gained only through an association with "classical"<sup>3</sup> music. In fact, association with other genres or types of music can be viewed, from the perspective of status, as the collection of negative points. Whereas one concert performance of classical music outside the university would elevate one's status considerably, one rock concert performance by an otherwise "serious" musician would call into question one's whole seriousness about music altogether. Jazz, but certainly not pop or rock, has become the focus of much discussion in the music schools. Students see this type of music, jazz, as a form of unacceptable worthy music, that is a style of music which is deemed by the institution as "worthy" of consideration but



nevertheless "unacceptable" for inclusion within the more serious topics in the curriculum. This appears to be a significant concern for many students. Although these adjectives seem to be forced in their juxtaposition, the status of jazz in the institution is a most complex one where on the one hand it is fully acknowledged and promoted while at the same time never being offered the corresponding status as "real music". Thus students are "safe" if they stick to "classical", can negotiate the acknowledgement of "jazz" and must typically keep to themselves their love of "rock" and "heavy metal", "country" or "barbershopping". One student who had formed a performing group of "jazz" players, mostly of music students, describes his frustration in trying to get a rehearsal room within the music school for his ensemble. He is convinced that the difficulties were largely attributable to the type of music that the group was performing. He says,

Well last year I was furious with the administration because we booked maybe 104 I'm sure you know the big room for our group to rehearse in every Sunday night, we got our rooms pretty good why don't you listen and a we received a memo, now the choir didn't receive a memo there was a memo put out. It wasn't addressed to us it talked all about us but it was not, we didn't even know about it, a friend of mine, one of the girls in the group stumbled upon it and said hey xxxxx look at this I wasn't notified about it and what they were doing was they were sending a memo up to ? House where all the reservations are made and said look this is a non-music group, there is only a few music students in it and their renting our rooms. Well, I think they should go up to you guys and rent rooms from you because it should be a university club not a music club. Now the thing was out of out of those 15 people in the group two were not music they didn't know that, they made that assumption sent it up saying we are a university group. If we, I'm convinced, if we were a brass choir we would have - sure take the room, take the room. Now it's funny they did swing back all of sudden, we got the room all of a sudden but only

after some kicked up a stink but there is no communication for us and the fact was it was jazz.(M3-6:16/17)

Students affiliated to the "jazz groups" claimed unequal treatment. Because of the growing change in the definition of "music" for this community, various universities in Canada are at different stages of acceptance of "jazz" as a worthy and acceptable type of music. Thus students are able to compare one institution with another which itself leads to a heightened sense of frustration where "jazz" as part of the acceptable definition of music is seen to lag behind<sup>4</sup>. This same students explains later in the interview,

I'm just painting a picture of the unequal treatment given. Because one type of music is preferred and for some reason, without bashing my head against the wall, to figure out the last couple of years they are ignoring. Now see the thing is I talked to guys from Saskatchewan, talking from Brandon, I think some from ? they do jazz and they are not growing hairs on their tongues

**And they are what?**

And they are not growing hairs on their tongues. They study jazz, they play the jazz and it is working.(M3-6:19/20)

At MUN, as at other Faculties of Education, it is possible to gain acceptance into a teacher education program as a second degree. This student came from a university that offered a full jazz degree program. While this type of degree program is unusual in Canada, there is a growing trend toward the inclusion of jazz studies. This student comments on how he was accepted by the others at MUN who were taking the music degree program at MUN.

**Do you think you perceived by the other students here is there equal?**

Ah, not really. Well I find like for me like in the classroom where I come from a different background a lot of times I'm not sure what people are talking about, like the different names for example ha, and pieces somehow I don't have classical background at all, so when somebody talks about some part in a piece chances are I'm not going to be familiar with it.(P4:13)

This student in Vancouver was well known for his association with popular music. He comments on his association with his piano teacher at the university.

**Do you think he treated the general music students any different than he did the performance people.**

Yea, I think he did. I think he taught, I think he, he had kind of a snide side to him. He knew that I played popular music and he personally wasn't a fan of it. He used to make comments about a bottle of beer sitting on your piano and things like that. And I mean that's the way it was, so I just laughed at him.(V9:8)

#### (4) Academic year

Senior students enjoy a privileged position because they have a special status which can, in some institutions, even override many of the other status claims that students hold in this community. This is usually an attempt by the institution to provide for their students opportunities which the students, on a community competitive status basis, would not otherwise be able to achieve. As the discussion about the other point gaining affiliations unfolds, it will become clearer why students often see the necessity for the institution occasionally to intervene "officially" with rules or decisions for the apparent benefit of some individual students. Other students,

of course, fail to acknowledge the necessity of this form of "official" intervention at all and wish for a much stronger and open "competitive" atmosphere where all opportunities are equally available without any form of sponsorship intervention<sup>5</sup>. Otherwise, students group themselves very strongly by academic year affiliation. Students claim that this grouping by year results from the fact that they share many common classes and thus many common challenges and problems. Students become known as the Class of '92. Opportunities which may enhance one's status inside the community are often known only to more senior students because of contacts made within as well as external to the institution. Thus with more opportunity, they are usually able to attract more status points for their identity in the community. It might be worth mentioning that this particular facet of status seems to be most valuable at the beginning of each academic year when the community regroups for another semester or year. It is typically at this time when the university intervenes with rules about who gets to play in which groups and who gets which teacher for example. This third year UWO student explains.

...there is a lot of competition for chairs in ensembles and that just doesn't happen here. Sure there's competition and there are a lot of feathers ruffled if people don't get the seats they expect to get because of the year they're in, whereas that shouldn't happen. If you're good you deserve that chair, and that happens at Laurier. But here they give a lot of preference to senior students.(M3-7:10)

There is no clear perception by members of the music education community as to whether the rules of the institution are substantially based on "sponsored" or "contest" models (Turner, 1960). In fact, there is every reason to suppose that the perception of the rather apparent random application of these two standards is responsible, in large measure, for what will be demonstrated to be the frustration at achieving full "musician" identity by the music education students. The academic

programme certainly provides in many instances the appearance of a "sponsored" model because many performing opportunities are either officially or perceived in practice to be denied to students other than those "officially" in performance, i.e. not available to music education students. Rue (1988:147) on the other hand, suggests to enhance the development of college community that,

the institution can also develop more meaningful rites of passage. The labels of freshman, sophomore, junior and senior are virtually meaningless on the College Park campus as most students take more than four years to finish their degree.

In the music community, the interference of a "contest" model by offering opportunities to any preselected group of students is perceived as a negative force by those students seeking higher statuses as a "musician". Students who appear to be less driven towards that goal and are not attempting to compete for rewards closed to them by the "sponsored" model generally do not perceive the confusion as problematic. But for some, it is a major source of irritation. More about this will follow.

## (5) Applied Principal Instrument

Because the music schools have various performing groups to provide educational opportunities for students, it is clear that where certain instruments (or voice types, tenor being the most obvious) are in rare supply and nevertheless in critical demand, in order to constitute such performing groups, the perceived level of performance or other criteria more generally applied by the music school may have to be

compromised. As a typology of this problem, it might be suggested that in some cases students judge each other in a nominative model. Thus the average piano player on campus is just that, the average, one of hundreds of piano players. To be the one oboe player on the other hand, is to deserve special status recognition in a nominative way. This is not to be confused with the status of playing very well as opposed with not playing well. This judgement is a normative model and appears to be applied more thoroughly to players of more commonly found instrumentalist or voice categories. Thus sopranos appear to be more likely to be judged in a normative way than the tenors simply because there are typically so many more of them. This last status is not one of affiliation like the others but is accrued to the individual with reference to a perceived community standard and will be discussed in depth later.

As a result of this type of affiliation, the group of violists, oboists, tenors and harpists may be considered "special" because they occur in the community in smaller numbers while the demand for them remains relatively high because of their essential presence required by the various performing groups.

During observation, it becomes obvious that a major reference point of identification among the students is their performing major and students make their first approaches to each other with "Who are you" and "What's your major?" A typical response after learning that this particular individual plays oboe for example would be, "Oh, you're the first year oboe player." In fact, people often become known simply as "the oboist". The tenors, oboists, and violists soon learn that this response earns them a special place in the minds of others. The pianists and sopranos must search elsewhere. Here a trombonist explains his position.

Yea but there's so many, I don't know. I like being one of a sub-group rather than one of the mass, you know.

**You play trombone because there's fewer of you?**

Yea.

**Is there anywhere else that you get individual attention by being the trombonist rather than being the pianist?**

No not really, I don't know, I think you get it in ensembles a lot better than if you're a pianist, then a trombone, you also play trombone. I think pianist pretty well go in choirs unless they're really good and then they get put in a band, as far as ensembles goes.(M3-4:2/3)

## (6) Applied Principal Instrument Teacher

While it is not unusual for a graduate student to seek out certain well-known authorities as graduate advisors or tutors, the average undergraduate in Canada has seldom much choice with whom he will study first year English or History. Occasionally at large universities there will be multiple sections of certain courses and students may get to select an instructor by selecting a particular time slot when a course is offered by the sought after instructor. In practice, there is little evidence to suggest that this model is employed in early undergraduate education in non-music disciplines in Canadian universities.

Such is not the case at all with music students looking for an applied teacher. Often students reported that they had selected a particular institution because professor "A" or "B" was teaching violin there. Many students ask at the time of auditioning

for entrance that they want to study with professor "A" or "B". Some even say that they will go elsewhere if they are not assigned "A".

Kingsbury (1984:107) writes,

An unsatisfactory relationship with one's teacher almost inevitably leads the student either to try for a change of teacher or consider changing schools. By contrast, the dissatisfaction with the institution felt by so many of the students was typically presented to me mainly as contrasting foil for the high regard those students had for the individual teachers.

Why? Applied teachers have a reputation which attracts students to them. Much of this reputation however is often fabricated, sometimes by the faculty member himself, often by the university when hiring specifically new faculty so that often these new members of faculty arrive bearing the awesome responsibility of fame with them. Much of this reputation is generated by public performance and gradually, as teachers attract better and better students by the performance products of their students. Often this is "officially" designated by having some faculty reserved for "performance majors" as opposed to be available to teach anyone in the general music school population. Again the confusion of policy upon the apparent application of either sponsored or contest rules. Students report that not all students can always compete for a place with the best teachers. Since, as Kingsbury points out as well, this is of such considerable importance, it is easy to understand that dissatisfaction may be evident among the students. Hopper (1968:94) writes, "A system with a centralized and standardized selection process reinforced by a sponsorship ideology is similar to a 'Talent Show' in which participants display their talent to a panel of judges who are assumed to have good judgement". This emerges as almost the rawest description of the process of selection in a music school. Students are required to put



on exactly this "talent show" and the internal instructor/student relationships are formalised with this process, even in cases where the sponsorship model has made previous decisions. Thus the process can be viewed as equally fair to all students while the sponsorship model accounts for many of the decisions in advance. Therefore students undertake various strategies to assure themselves of a position with the desired applied teacher in advance of the formal "talent show" by seeking out ways to gain acceptance through the sponsorship strategy. One typical model for in-coming students is to have their former teachers approach the desired university applied teacher. This was reported often by students and appeared to be an acceptable strategy to the university because it was often successful. The choice of applied teachers appears to be an exceptionally important issue with students. This seems particularly true in larger institutions where there is a real choice between teachers. In the smaller schools, such as MUN, there is usually only one applied instructor for each instrumental area. But where there are multiple teachers, such as in the most common area of applied piano, the student strategy to get the "best" one appears to be as aggressively operationalized as in the larger schools. The applied instructors appear equally interested in getting the "best" students<sup>6</sup>. Thus teachers who perform often and let that message pervade their image attract the attention of some students. This student at UWO explains.

**But you still like the idea that she performs publicly.**

Yea, I guess it's a status thing

**For you or her?**

For me I suppose

**Why?**

Because most other people's teachers don't

**Is that true.**

Well I've never heard my other teacher from Samia.(M2-2:13)

Another student suggests that although "teaching" quality is most important, "image" quality generated by national radio broadcasts is not such a bad thing either.

I don't know. Not so much. I mean the best performers are not necessarily the best teachers. Right? So I don't feel that it's too important. It's nice to say yea, my teacher's on CBC, and go home and tell your friend that.

**Do you do that?**

Oh yea, it's just fun. Well I don't go around advertising it to everybody you know but it's a nice thing to bring up that I have a really good teacher who's been performing across Canada. It's nice to say.(M2-7:10/11)

Students are quick to point out to other students that they are studying with certain applied professors particularly "music education" students who are studying with teachers typically assigned or attracting "performance majors". To offer Kingsbury (1984:111) the last word seems appropriate. He writes,

The fact that [a] teachers' prestige is augmented by their students' success is mirrored by the fact that students draw status from association with a prestigious teacher.

## (7) Ensemble and Chair

One of the most powerful status affiliations is the ensemble that each student is typically required to participate in. In the larger institutions, there are many different choirs and bands to which students are either assigned or audition to gain entrance. It is here that the institution sometimes makes rules with respect to "academic year" and says the only final year students will be considered or that all final year students will be placed before auditions for remaining places are opened to others, modelled after apparent rules of sponsorship. Where this does not occur, then competitive auditions are used to place students not only in the various ensembles but in the ranked "chairs" within the ensemble. Therefore students must negotiate status often by seeking to balance the apparent relative status weight of playing 1st chair in a "poor" or "average" group against playing "last desk" in the "best" group. This first year student explains his early ignorance of this system after trying to expand his experience base by seeking out a chair in the orchestra.

I don't. I don't remember the first day last year. I do remember getting into Symphonic Band, like being told what you're in.

**Is that good?**

I was hoping....well I didn't really understand how they work here. How the different bands work here. They sort of start with Symphonic Band and as you get better and better, I didn't realize that, I just sort of thought they were different experiences, but it doesn't go as you get better. I had played in band in high school and I wanted to get into the Symphony, but I didn't realise the hierarchy, whatever.(M2-4:9)

The various ensembles gain "nick-names" which are often less than complimentary. Nevertheless they are common in everyday usage. This student tells which choir she participates in.

**Which choir?**

Les Choriste

**The broad-squad!**

That's not nice,

**That's not my term**

Yes I know

**So you've heard it before.**

Oh yea(M2-9:14)

The major choral performing group at UWO is the Faculty of Music Singers. This is a relatively small elite group of auditioned students who do much public touring and performing. They represent a major public relations vehicle for the Faculty of Music. Their reputation is well known and the social result is one of extreme elitism and social segregation. This student explains.

**And then there's the Singers.**

Yea well that's a clique unto itself. That was a little joke between Larry and me that we weren't going to be able to talk to anybody once we got into Singers.

**People tell you that?**

It's no secret. A friend of Larry's and he was really good friends with him in first year and once he got into singers, they never spoke. You say hi in the halls but you never sit down and have a conversation with them.

**Why not?**

I don't know what it is. They are a really good choir and a lot of them are voice majors and they spend a lot of time on repertoire together...(M3-7:7/8)

Another student describes the barrier to social contact with members of this group.

**And they all sing in Faculty Singers.**

No, those guys are a major clique. They do everything together and they don't let anybody else join in at all.

**How do they stop you?**

By ignoring you, like a whole group of them will be standing there and you'll be trying to participate in what they're doing and they just carry on like you're not there. And the thing that kills me is that most of them smoke too. Chain smokers and the rest of us don't smoke, maybe we'll have to start smoking to get in there. It's a big thing around the faculty that as soon as you get in you have to smoke and you can't talk to anybody except other Singers. In the cafeteria, there's a table for Singers and then everybody else and they don't mingle. Like the guy that here before me, he just stays in this group and doesn't care what goes on around.(M2-11:7/8)

Yet another student explains the relative status result in the community.

**So what do they do to make them snobs?**

They just look down on people. Looks and it has to do with the eyes. Looks. Just these stares. They just look at you like their better than you. The attitude is just that they feel better than we are, like they have a high ideal of themselves. The Faculty Singers are like here (indicates up) and they get more coverage and they have more prestige. They are the better group and the better singers and so they should be up there but it just bothers me that they look down on other people that are lower than them. I would never want to be that high. I don't mean Faculty Singers, just that high that I'd look down on people like that. Everybody is equal in their own way.(M2-3:13/4)

On the instrumental side of things, the various bands compete for relative status but seem unable to usurp the pre-eminence of the symphony. The best instrumentalists, particularly winds, for the strings have little other option, seek positions in the orchestra and then the best "chairs" among those positions. Down in the "lower" levels of instrumental ensemble status is the notorious "slam band". Like the "broad squad" (the all ladies choral ensemble described earlier), the "slam band" appears to be the dumping ground for all not able to find a "higher", that is, more prestigious position. This first year student explains but carefully points out his defence with respect to only being in first year. (Academic year sponsored model)

**Did you audition for band?**

Yea, I wasn't as prepared as I would have liked to have been but it went fairly well. I didn't .....I auditioned for jazz on Wednesday so I didn't get into the orchestra or symphonic band or wind ensemble. I think it's good cause they were tough auditions and it was really competitive but ah..... like I've played basically jazz in high school so I was looking for something more serious and.....If I hadn't auditioned for jazz I would have been in symphonic band.

**Is that good?**

For a 1st year it's alright. Symphonic band seems to be where...if you're not good enough for wind ensemble or orchestra..you get thrown into "Slam Band". they call it. That's what people said.(M1-1:11)

This third-year student sums up the notion of performing in these less than desirable groups, both choral and instrumental. Notice the reference to the low status attributed to "piano majors" and the idea that these "lower" ensembles are treated as "sentences to serve".

You just, you hear around the building all the time the Symphonic Band is affectionately known as "slam band" and nobody wants to play in it. It's mostly for first year students and some second year, some third year, and I don't know it's just you hear about it all the time you know where you're playing. And you say in Symphonic Band and then you hear like < oh no, another sentence to serve > or something. It's just the same with choirs too, we have four choirs and the concert choirs for the piano majors and people who couldn't sing well enough to get anywhere else. I don't like that at all.(M3-1:13)

As has been mentioned earlier, there is some considerable apparent conflict between the various status granting affiliations and where the presumption of opportunity of one group, based upon sponsored rules or access, interferes with another operating with contest rules or access, this conflict surfaces. It is a typical observation that "performance" majors assume that opportunities should be made available to them exclusively, in a sponsored fashion, because it prepares them better by providing opportunities which they "really" need. This example from UBC is typical of the situation where "lower" status" music education performers usurp the rights of "performance majors".

Because they think that performance majors should be better than the music education students.

**Who thinks that?**

Performance majors.

**Oh the performance majors think that.**

Yes and they're very, very jealous, they were angry. I know that two of the flute players were music education students and they were very angry about that.

**Two of the flute players playing in the orchestra?**

In the orchestra were music education students.(V1:10)

Although to an outsider these things may not seem all that important, to the members of the music school community, i.e., a "musician", one's whole self-worth (Kingsbury, 1984)<sup>7</sup> may be entwined into this very ensemble issue. This third-year student explains.

It was the first thing I noticed here was the sense of competitiveness, and I don't like it at all. The ensembles they place you in go up this week, and I don't care where I am as long as I get to play somewhere; the rest is up to me. And everyone makes such a big deal out of it because if you get stuck in symphonic band you're not worth anything.(M3-1:12/13)

Kingsbury (1984:266) refers to this notion of "self-worth"<sup>8</sup> and its connection to performance as follows,

The mechanical-technical/emotional-expressive dualism entails implicit notions of the nature of the performer as an individual, or more specifically, notions regarding the moral worth of the



inner person as contrasted with the performance skills of the trained musician.

The notion of status for "chairs" is explained in this report.

**What's fairly high up mean?**

Well by the end of the year I was sitting beside the principal in the orchestra but this year I am the principal but I don't like the responsibility so much. I'm more of a follower than a leader.(M2-5:1)

This music education student's comment shows not only the importance of 1st chairs but also shows very strongly the notion that the orchestra is considered the "best" group and further that the expectation that music education students would not be able to achieve this status was worthy of not only comment but also "pride".

You cannot learn about music without performing music which is part of the problem of how the university program is trying to bring across save for the performance program and I'm proud to say that I was a member of the university orchestra in my third year when everyone of the principle chairs in the orchestra was occupied by a music education major.(2A4:6/7)

**(8) Academic Programme**

This is the most central to the study at hand for it is a study of one specific academic group that is examined here. Music schools are typically divided into academic programmes in performance, musicology, theory and composition as well

as music education (or general studies where the political structures confine the education title to the education faculty, eg. MUN and U of A).

Although all students must perform and have some major performing instrument, the quality of their performance is not totally open to competitive opinion. "Performance majors" are typically "better" performers by definition, a notion based in sponsored models of social action. This is, in fact, critical to the operation of the music school. Often though, the lack of agreement by all members of the community challenges the official definition. In fact, as can be seen from the earlier example where music education students claimed competitive chairs in the orchestra, this "better performer by definition" can be variously challenged with the result that considerable tension can be generated in the community when particularly music education students do not keep their place and out-perform the "performance majors". Among music education students, the notion of "better by definition" is uniformly challenged<sup>9</sup>. Thus those in the non-sponsored categories, seek mobility, not surprisingly, by contest regulation. This position does not appear to be shared by the performance majors generally. This student at UBC explains.

**Did anybody ever say anything about music education at the school of music?**

Oh that was even lower than the general music. If there has to be three rungs, it's the performance people, the general music people and the music education way down here.(V7:23)  
[He demonstrates the appropriate positions with his arms.]

At UWO, this music education student challenges the "definitional" status.

**So it doesn't really have anything to do with performance ability then?**

Not at all, not at all because I know of quite a few music education people who can play circles around a lot of the performers.(2A4:8)

This idea is more fully developed later in the analysis under "stigma".

### Other Point-Gaining opportunities

Within the music school, students also have access to other status rewards<sup>10</sup>. The largest number result by the affiliations listed above. Each of these affiliations have specific "rewards" for the students. But some groups have few rewards to offer individuals in the community while others have many. These additional point-gaining opportunities emerge as important opportunities for students, but not for all students generally as the eight major areas discussed earlier, but as opportunities for a smaller number of students, or where sufficient points must have been previously gathered to continue in the race for these additional opportunities. Only a few students are able to win major scholarships or compete for the university gold medal. Only a few students can study with the "best" teachers, although the meaning of "best" enjoys widespread diversity, thus allowing for several "bests" and thus the opportunities to gain a higher level of points for having achieved a place in that "best" teacher's class. The gaining of points in this community has a "career". It appears to be a series of individual but identifiable events or affiliations which are compounded. It emerges as a series of "status passages" where each passage is seen by students as desirable but

often lacks "clarity". These terms from Glaser and Strauss (1971:5) are only two of twelve they list as properties of status passage. Students present these two properties as the most important concerns. Since the point-gaining strategy is so important to students, the risk that the "clarity", ie. the degree of notice taken by others, may be low is of substantial concern. This appears to lead in some cases to what these authors describe as a "crisis". They (1971:144) write, "a status passage may tend to be so competitive that it blots out, if only temporarily, the priority claims of other passages". Thus some students appear to seek competitive entry into certain performing ensembles and into certain applied teacher's classes so much so that other point-gaining opportunities, which might result in a further career development, are set aside completely, occasionally without an opportunity to be recaptured. Thus many of the conflicts in the community appear to arise as a result of students, who, for whatever reasons, cannot gain access to a particular status group or have chosen not to seek affiliation to a particular group (the students who have elected music education rather than applied performance for example), being subsequently denied access to the individual status rewards that are available only to members of those specific groups.

The apparent theory is that the greater number of available rewards, the greater is the likelihood of conflict over those rewards arising. Feuer (1969:88) reports this phenomenon researched by Stouffer after the Second World War.

In the United States during World War II, the men in the Air Force were found to be more discontented with their rank than were the men in the Military Police. This, despite the fact that the Air Force was full of corporals and sergeants, whereas the Military Police were mostly privates. Indeed, the very plentifulness of opportunity in the Air Force deepened the sense of disappointment, personal inadequacy, and resentment in the minds of those defeated in the competitive struggle for stripes.

On the other hand, the M.P. felt less relatively deprived, since most of his friends shared his lowly status.<sup>11</sup>

Thus in situation where one single student may win the university gold medal the opportunity for conflict is dramatically diminished simply because within the community there are only a very few students who might even be considered eligible for this reward. In the case of performance opportunities, there are many but not sufficient to satisfy the community demand. Because so many students are, or consider themselves to be, eligible for such rewards, the community is substantially more distressed when these are withheld simply because the expectation to receive them is higher. This UBC student explains.

Oh no but they want to, you're always looking ahead, you're always trying to make sure that you're the best in something or that you're the first one that did such and such and that you're the best one or that you won this competition or that you did the concerto with the symphony orchestra, your exposure.

**So there are institutional prizes then?**

Yes, there's scholarships and there's concerto competition.(V7:17)

Scholarships play a significant role as status rewards because they can be assigned criteria that make them "musical" awards rather than "academic" awards. Because "music making" is an academic exercise of the music school, there would appear on the surface to be little conflict but students report that scholarships are used to "buy" necessary ensemble instruments like oboists from among applicants as well as students of high musical potential rather than just high academic potential. Scholarships in one

institution of the study were known among the students as faculty tools to "buy" loyalty to individuals and to the music school itself.

The most obvious individual academic award is the university gold medal. Because performance prowess is evaluated, it is inconceivable to have a poor performer winning the gold medal. However, pure academic scholarship in all the other courses is also required. The only difficulty with making a strong case for the importance of the gold medal is that it is awarded at graduation and typically these students do not return to the institution so the community is usually unaware of the recipient anyway. But for access to graduate schools and to the Faculty of Education at UWO where the students all apply after their first degree this winner explains its significance.

I got the gold medal in fourth year so it looks really legit. academically. My resume looks pretty good with all my background and experience previous to coming to Western.(A8:16)

At U of A, academic help appears to be offered to students according to status group affiliations rather than a more reasonable standard such as being registered in a course. This student describes her observations.

There is, as far as I could see, almost a preferential treatment by the professors, the music professors will assist a music student almost before they will an education student because there is kind of a pecking order if you are in education you really, really have to work in order to make this professor believe that you're actually do want music as like a lifetime profession... there was a stigma attached to being an education student.(E4:10)

Since graduating with an "honours" degree carries so much status weight in the community at UWO, there is considerable pressure to maintain one's affiliation with that group of students in the community. The university rules for removal from that programme are particularly rigid, however, there are reported cases where students who are either exceptional performers or were members of a "needed" instrument group (the oboists again for example) are forgiven their academic sins and are allowed to continue in the honours programme in breach of the "rules". This UWO student explains.

...there's a lot of politics involved especially with the administration with a, ... politics. Ah we're going to encourage our orchestra this year, we have to build up our orchestra, let's encourage those orchestra players by letting them graduate with honours degrees and when they didn't get all honours marks, letting them place in these competitions even though maybe our pianist or vocalist might have done better, but they have other competitions and that kind of thing.(A6:20/21)

A similar student report from UBC confirms that this type of activity is not limited to UWO. In fact there were several reports of this kind. There is no "official" substantiation that this occurs and it would be unlikely to obtain such, but since our account is from the students' perspective, that they believe it to be the case would suggest that they take it into account on that basis. The members of the community are, however, not surprised to learn of this. This UBC report highlights this further.

**I'm just checking out things that I've seen other places and I want to find out if there the same here. Ever had an occasion to see one of the performance majors be forgiven of university rules because they were an exceptional performer?**

Yea that I saw.

**That has happened. Can you tell me about that?**

Well I can think of one student who was very good, he came from Toronto, and he played with some orchestra out there and he was in one of my classes and he had to go for rehearsals and performances out there and he took off and he was gone for a couple of months and came back and magically finished the year like everyone else. They just give you leeway. That's over there, that's not here.(V6:21)

Certain courses at U of A were closed to music education students. While the students felt that access to these courses may have allowed them to be more fully accepted into the music community, they were nevertheless barred from registration in these courses. This U of A student explains.

...than those people who are just in education taking music courses because their music courses are not comparable to actually the courses that you take..

**What do you mean they are not comparable?**

Well in a sense like certain courses goes further and certain courses that music education students were not allowed to take or things like that.(E1:23)

Also at U of A, the music department has established a different set of course numbers for essentially the same applied performance courses, ie. courses which are individual lessons on trumpet for trumpet majors and on piano for piano majors. Since each student must perform on a major applied instrument, each student gets private instruction on these instruments as "courses" within the university programme. Although these courses ought to recognize that each student progresses in these private lessons at their own individual rate and that the level of performance varies from student to student, the faculty have nevertheless created specific course numbers



for music education students which apparently, in students' perception, allows for other rewards to be distributed on the basis of eligibility (sponsored) that denies the students registered in these courses. The students see the courses as equivalent but simply renumbered. This U of A student explains.

You are 224, they are 223, they've got a 223, 323, 423 program whereas we are the 24 series which is their distinction because there are certain courses that music students and education alone can take, there are certain courses that only music students can take and certain courses that only education students can take so there's kind of a built in stigma in the actual courses, same courses but different numbers and different guidelines. (E4:22)

The status accrued by being in a particular applied professor's class (ie. the trumpet or piano teacher) is seen by students as a form of status reward as well. Once in the class the status is achieved by affiliation. Before the student is accepted the status remain an award to be distributed. Teachers who teach predominantly "performance majors" are typically seen as the "best" teachers by definition. In larger institutions, students have very little real information about the various faculty members and clues as to their "importance" or relative "goodness" are gleaned from such information as their current public performing record and the number of performance majors in the class. Consider this response.

**Are you studying with the best voice teacher?**

No!

**How do you know that?**

Because apparently \*\*\*\* is the best one, she's had more experience and background. She's the performance teacher.

And that makes you think in your mind that she must be the best teacher.(M2-3:16)

In some situations, individual faculty members turn the situation to their own advantage to demonstrate their own status. From UBC in Vancouver there is this report.

Yea because, I mean, xxxxxxxxxxxx is one of the best clarinet players in Canada, I mean, it's quite obvious that he's not going to waste his time with somebody that isn't going to work hard or just hasn't got it. I mean, he has got the power that he can choose who he wants. You have to go and audition in front of him to find out whether he'll take you as a student or not and there are quite a few clarinet players so those that have xxxxxxxxxxxx are going to be good players.(V1:18)

Music education majors often do not qualify for the full-time faculty (sponsored model) and are assigned either "part-timers" or in some instances graduate students<sup>12</sup>. Students generally seek out the best teachers they can according to their abilities and institutional status based on their perception of who these "best" teachers may be.

Moving on now to another class of status rewards, physical space allocations, it can be seen that again certain status affiliation groups appear to attract certain rewards because of their status. Each music school has a number of practice rooms where students can go and practice their various instruments that they are studying, both as a major and for the music education courses which require various other instruments. However, the institutions seldom can boast sufficient practice space to accommodate all the students for all the time they wish to use such space. In some institutions practice space is desperately inadequate. In places such as MUN where the new music

building was constructed to accommodate larger numbers than are presently enrolled in the programme, the space is more than adequate. Such is not the case elsewhere. This leads the administration at schools where space is at a premium to devise sponsored systems to allocate space to students in some efficient and perceived fair way. Students seldom perceive the system, whatever it is, as adequate or fair in meeting their needs. At UWO, for example, beginning the fall that this research took place, a new regulation was introduced that set apart a certain number of practice rooms for the "piano majors". These students should have been delighted, according to faculty views, to have guaranteed space on the new good pianos just purchased by the music school. The students however pointed out that while they did have a limited pre-booked allocation, it was not sufficient and because this time was often in the middle of the day when all the other practice rooms would normally be occupied, when the pre-booked "sponsored" allocation was finished there was nowhere left to go. You were therefore better off finding one of the other non-assignable rooms and stay in it until you had finished your practice. The instrumentalists thus lost not only the assignable space but also the assignable space which went unoccupied. This student elaborates.

The only problem now is that the instrumentalists can get in. Shelly came bounding in one day and said "I hate piano majors, they should all just rot because there are no practice rooms around and you got yours because it's reserved and I can't practice" and then she stormed out of the room. And this is what is happening. Instrumentalists and vocalists are going to kill the piano majors except that there are more of us than them. They keep telling us about how it's not fair and they're furious with us all the time. The thing is that the practice room situation was just as bad last year, the only thing is now that some have been reserved. Well they're always in use anyway so it wouldn't matter if they were reserved or not. The piano majors would still be in there anyway so big deal.(M2-11:9)

This student explains the lack of time in the assignable space.

...but that doesn't matter cause it only for piano majors, well the one side is only for piano performance majors but the new uprights are just for piano majors. But it's kind of ridiculous cause there are about 10 to a room which is like one hour a day on a nice piano. And if it's the middle of the day when all the rooms are full anyway, when you get out of this reserved one you won't be able to get another room because all the rooms will be taken. I think there will be complications but upstairs, we'll try to see how it works.(M2-7:3)

At U of A the situation is even more curious. Although music education students are encouraged to participate "officially" in as many performing groups as they might like to, barriers such as practice room space are used to reward only music students. In fact, the music students are given a total absolute and exclusive right to the space and can remove the music education students, who are not currently registered in an applied course, at any time. This student explains.

just the attitude well she's an education student or even at the practice room you can't, you know, if you're an education student the music student has a privilege to take over, you know, if they want to practice you have to go right so in that way they kind of cheat them in the sense that they're not as important as the music students.(E1:10)

Although it might appear reasonable to provide performance majors with more lessons than students engaged in other areas of study in music, music education students perceive the additional lessons as a reward for performance majors as this excerpt highlights.

**Like what does that mean, that you're not a performance major? Do that have some sort of .....**

For one thing it means that I don't get 26 lessons a year, I only get 20, on the organ.

**Is that important?**

It is for me. Yea.(M3-5:13)

The largest supply of institutional status rewards are tied directly to the performance opportunities provided to students. Many performance opportunities are denied to the music education students in particular under the guise of definitional group or sponsored affiliation. Thus performance majors are eligible for status rewards which on an open market might otherwise be justifiably claimed by others. Often the quality of the performance or potential performance is not apparently taken into account. This type of educational reward causes the most apparent conflict in the music school. This music education student at MUN claims for example that,

Whenever something happens they are always the ones who are chosen...you know for the CBC taping or to go over to Halifax or something like that. They are always the ones.(P1:14/5)

Another MUN student elaborates.

**Would you say that the faculty view the performance major and you equally?**

No.

**Why not?**

Because the performance majors- they think are better. If anything comes up, I mean that's... If someone requests a pianist or singer to perform somewhere, the first one's they

are going to go to are the performance majors because they feel they are better.(P6:22)

At UWO where there are many performance majors and limited time to provide solo concert opportunities, students who are not in the performance program are denied permission to have a solo recital, i.e. the institutional reward is withheld. This graduate explains.

**Tell me what they were complaining about.**

Things like recitals. You couldn't have a solo recital unless you were in performance, you had to have a composite recital, with another person or two other people.(A9:21)

Conflict is also created when an open competition for ensemble chairs results in performance majors not succeeding in obtaining an appropriate chair in an ensemble which they feel definitionally they are entitled to. This UBC student reports the outcome of this occurrence.

You can tell by the attitude, how they look at each other, walk down the hall, this sort of glare, they won't talk to each other, you know, and the tension. You just know it's there even though you're playing the same stuff and they just didn't feel that they should be there.

**Just sort of like a God-given right if I've declared myself a performance major, so you got to let me perform?**

That's right, I should be in that chair, not you, because I have to make it as a performance major, you're going into education.(V1:10)

At the University of Toronto music school, it is reported that entire ensembles are restricted to performance majors and that music education majors cannot participate nor do they have access to the best teachers.

...the opportunities you have here as an education major you don't have at Toronto.

**Like what?**

Like if you're an education major in Toronto, you're, like that's it. That's what you are. But here you can play in orchestra if you're good enough and you can study with the best teachers whereas in Toronto you're more limited.(M3-2:5)

Another student report about U of T confirms this.

...at U of T they really make a difference between performance, like higher up and education is down there. And you can't perform in the major ensembles unless you're in performance and this kind of thing.(M2-6:3)

The music school can usually provide performing opportunities off-campus as well as on. These too become institutionally available rewards for students. Music education students frequently report situations where they are simply denied opportunities to do what they see as not only possible (with the same artistic outcomes) but also reasonable to expect. They appear distressed at the political decisions made to restrict the performing "rewards" to other affiliation groups. This MUN student explains.

Well, you do not get as much as attention; period. Not even, you know, now that you are going to be star of the school or

anything but you sort of limited in the courses you can take and limited in the singing that you can do and that only certain people can get a chance to sing and...

**Does that bother you?**

O Yea! More so because it is political reasons that you don't get to do all that you want. It is such a small group that if you have one person that people think is great, well they get all the attention. They are the ones who does all the singing and where someone who maybe isn't as great but needs encouragement and needs to be given a chance or they will never ever get any better, you know. They don't get the chances.(P7:5/6)

Another MUN student makes a similar claim.

...because from what I see most of the performance majors get more opportunities as musicians than the education people do and that's really discouraging.(P7:32)

The longest and most thorough account of this phenomenon comes from yet another MUN student.

**How would she be treated differently than you then?**

I don't know.....Well in one respect, they are treated the same academically but it just seems to be this category that they place these people in saying...these are the pride of the department.....which is well and good but the rest of us have something to offer as well and it seems like their performing ability .....well I can think of one instance where people were chosen to go to a festival a couple of years ago and ....you know....\*\*\*\*\*, \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* and \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* were chosen - ....but it seemed like the decision was made instantly. It didn't seem like there was room for anybody else, you know. So when there is an opening to something or a festival that you



may get some honours for the new music building, then send these wonderful people but forget the others who....aren't terrible performers and I'm sure they could show their worth in a festival of sorts or an opening, you know, just as a performance, not even being great as such. But it just seemed like anything big is for those guys and the rest of you little guys can do your conjoint degrees, you know. It just seems like there was a different mentality when it came to these people. And I know for a fact that ..it seems that when these people graduate and .....this is going to sound horrible....but when these people graduate and need a little bit of money to go to their graduate school, it seems like the money can be raised awfully quickly by connections from these people. But, get the conjoint major who wants to go and do graduate work...the fight is tooth and nail and a lot of it has to do with who you are.(P3:17/8)

Even once a performing obligation or opportunity is won there is no respite from the status reward opportunities. What music is selected or allowed in many cases determines the degree of status that may be accrued by this particular performance. In fact, music education students often complained that the choice of music made by teachers for them to study was easier than that selected for performance majors but nevertheless inappropriate. Since performance majors are definitionally "better" performers than others in the community, the music they play must reflect that superiority. This U of A student comments.

**What about the kind of music that you were playing, is that the same as music students would play?**

No!

**You get different repertoire? What would be different about it?**

I think it was easier. I asked her for more difficult music, she wouldn't give it to me.

**So it would be easy but inappropriate?**

Easy but inappropriate.(E5:9)

Thus it would be possible to feature these more difficult pieces at class recitals and leave the music education students with the feeling that, although they had played, it was of little consequence. Thus any status to be gained by the particular event was claimed in large degree by the "hard piece" performers. This music education student describes her class performance.

She had recitals and feature certain students and the rest of us would go up and play our crummy little piece and I decided I'd had enough of that.(A2:3)

And if that were not enough, concert etiquette allows special status to be garnered by the performer who plays in the "star" spot which is either the last or penultimate position on a concert depending on the particular protocol in place. Thus it is even possible to award further status reward to certain students even after the music education student has first won the opportunity to perform and has selected and performed a difficult piece. This UWO graduate explains.

**And how did she treat the performance person differently?**

I think she gave him more time, I think....I know for a fact that she gave him lessons for maybe half an hour here and there that he didn't really have coming to him. Just to help him before a performance. Yea, I know that for sure and even in Master class she seemed to put him above the rest of us.

**How would she do that?**

Just by having him play last, playing his very good piece last.

**In the star spot?**

It is clear from the foregoing commentary and examples that the music school is divided into discreet sub-groups, some officially mandated, other more informally socially constructed, all of which offer the students certain degree of status in the music school. Status is available by affiliation to certain groups and sub-groups within the global music community because students interact in a way which accepts or acknowledges the status standing<sup>13</sup>. This attributed status level appears to be well recognized by the students and there appears little disagreement as to the status hierarchy of the various performing ensembles. Thus members of student population appear to transfer from the affiliation group that status which is attributed to the group by the students themselves. Otherwise status is derived by specific status rewards. These are, however, often restricted for assignment only to members of specific affiliation groups by the implementation of a "sponsored" model. Other restrictions are more structural, for example, a gain in status for touring might only be possible for members of one particular performing group. Also, to perform a solo or even a soli section with that group, as a normal member of the group, would offer status that would only be accessible to members of the group in the first place. Most of the status rewards in the music school are tied to performance opportunities and many are withheld from the music education student population for distribution to definitionally "superior" groups in a sponsored model and this appears to be the cause of much discontent among many, but not all, the music education students.

There appears to be substantial social differentiation in a music school, a social process not unlike the "polarization" described by Lacey (1970) in Hightown Grammar. The official streams of "music education" and "performance" are viewed

by students as polarized areas of study by students. Music education students often report that they view the "performance" students as out of touch with reality or as dreamers while the "performance" students see the music education students as unserious musicians. Thus while enjoying an apparent common bond in a social world of "musicians" on campus, viewed by themselves as separate and insulated from the rest of the campus, within this global community, there appear to be many opposite corners into which students can travel.

These inequities in the availability of status rewards and the status garnered from affiliation to certain status groups appears to be the cause of considerable student frustration and conflict. In fact, operationally, the music education stream is generally seen by the students as a stigmatized group. It is to this that the analysis now turns.

Our analysis has taken us through an investigation of the properties of the categories that relate to the music school as a "symbolic" community. The sense of general insulation from the university as a community and the construct of the music student as "insider" and the ritual associated with gaining admittance to the community. In addition an examination of the opportunities that the music school offers students to gather status points consistent with Goffman's (1967) theory developed in his Interaction Ritual was undertaken. By recognizing a polarization between the groups of students designated officially as "performance major" or "music education major", the analysis now turns to the impact that the sense of "stigma" has for the music education students.

## Stigma and Music Education

Well it's kind of the unsaid sort of cliché: those who can do, those who can't teach.(V1:6)

The two major academic sub-groups in the music schools are the "performance-major" and the "music education-major". While students can major in "musicology" or "theory and composition", these other academic groups are not large and do not appear to play a significant part in the cultural life of the community. Each of these other groups is seen by the students in the major sub-groups, music education and performance, as somehow removed from music. Musicologists write about it but are not seen as making music. Theorists analyze it but are not seen as making music<sup>14</sup>. This UWO student explains.

### **So why not performance, theory or BA with music?**

I don't know but in this school you're really either performance or mus ed. The other stuff isn't really important here. But you may have talked to some people who are doing that. For the most part she doesn't want to teach, she wants to be rich. I said well don't look at me!(M4-7:17)

Physically the students in performance at UWO isolate themselves in their own lounge. This graduate recalls,

### **How do I identify one of them?**

The performers? First of all they were always in the second floor lounge, always, always.....that's .....they had their social thing there and they were just there.(A10:17)

The music education students themselves identify the treatment of their group as stigmatised. This emerges as the next important category for analysis. Music education students tell of instances where they were "put down", "frowned upon", "feeling lower", and other sorts of denegrative explicatives. This Vancouver student recounts his impressions.

Yea there was and I didn't know too many people that were on it because they spent most of their time over here which is another matter. If you won't admit it to that, I found at that time that music education people were pretty much, I can't put it much plainer than they were frowned upon over in the music building because if you're going into music education it meant that you weren't any kind of a musician and that's the stigma that is upheld over there I think too.(V8:14/5)

This student at U of A in Edmonton reflects upon the notion that the music education students are not considered "musicians".

**With the other kids as well?**

Yea. The thing that bothers me a lot about what goes on in the music department is they have no respect for music education students, very little. Part of it is because they don't see the education students with the same type of courses, course load, content that they have. And to them music education students are not musicians. Like this is coming from them. This is not coming from me. But, it is coming from them. The attitude there is well if you can't do it; hack music there and you come over here. That's their approach.(E6:18/19)

This treatment and attitude is seen by the students not to be generated solely by other students. The members of faculty at U of A are seen by the students as contributing significantly to these opinions. This same student continues.

Oh they'll say Oh, I heard someone playing last night and they couldn't do this right and it must have been a bachelor of education student. I took a 350 last... two years ago... a year ago or so and they are talking about how slow the class is progressing and someone said "Oh, that's because there are so many education students in there. That kind of... those kinds of comments.(E6:19)

Another U of A student even shifts the blame off the students and onto the professors. She explains,

Yea. I didn't have ... I never felt that there was any kind of aloofness expressed by any of the students but by the professors yea. Some of the music professors, and one in particular, I found who ... I've had two classes with this year one was a required course for music education people and the second one is a required course for music majors and I'm taking it as an elective, I'm the only education person in there and he's like a different man in the second course. That's the one with the really high average. It's incredible and he even said himself not in so many words but I'm sure glad all of the education and other faculty buffoons are out of here and the serious people are in here now and the marks really reflect that, you know.(E8:7)

Music education students see themselves viewed differently and typically as a lower level of student. This view is typically supported by comparing the level of displayed performance ability. Consider these two examples from the interviews.

**What's life like over there, when you get over there as an education student?**

They look down on the education students as a music department.(E2:8)

and this excerpt

I think they don't talk about it as much as the probably should. It's like when I was there for four years it was mostly you have ... well because may be I was in the performance field, I don't know, but performance is so important like who cares about education, you know, anything else doesn't consider to be important except for performance and that's the focus they like to have and I think that's probably why they don't have too many people coming from the music faculty to come into education after they graduate because they feel that they could be a professional performer and going through that performance thing for four years may be they would think that you are better than ... you are lowering yourself if you go into education kind of thing, you know what I'm saying?(E1:8/9)

From Vancouver the same type of account is told.

Those people that are in performance, I felt, were on a pedestal above everybody else. I mean, especially something that's in the fine arts oh music for the sake of music and the whole bit. They have this really holy attitude towards this art, I guess, and was looking at it from a more practical point of view, at least I thought so, I mean I'm not going to be able to find a job as a clarinetist at the end of four years so why go into performance. My doors are still open going into education but yet those people that are in performance felt that I was cheating the whole music end of it.(V1:7)

The focus of the disdain lies with the performance prowess and the possible lack of it or the likely loss of it after graduation. This identification with performance as



the major criteria of worth and status reward emerges as the single most likely important underpinning of the music school. This first year student at UWO, who does not intend to pursue music education, views performance as a "power" which would be lost on "little kids".

**What do you think of the people that are here and don't play anymore? Like theory and just write books about it.**

They've lost something. That's going to bother me in a way. You never lose it. As a teacher.....it must be a real letdown to say that I got all these AR pieces<sup>15</sup> and go down to music education and say OK let's sing to a bunch of little kids. It must be such a letdown. To have all that power in your hands and then say <<sing row row row your boat>> To have played the masters and then play these little things.(M1-3:16)

In fact, it is not uncommon to have students express their disappointment at coming to the conclusion that their dream of performing is not realistic. Thus music education is seen as a "back-up" or the only way to put their musicianship to "work". One of L'Roy's interviewees puts it this way,

If we have to prove our worth as performers every semester in juries, I resent the fact that those who are just in music education for insurance don't have to prove that they can teach. (L'Roy, 1983:131)

But typically, this is viewed as compromise and not an equal replacement for the performing activity. From UWO this explanation,

...I would really love to perform but you have to be very very good to make a living out of that so I sort of moved down a notch and thought education.(M1-3:1)

This awareness of superiority as a performer appears to lead to the total inability of some students to continue in music education at all. This graduate at UWO describes one of her colleagues who had just quit the teacher education program.

There are a couple of people or one person in particular who is a fantastic instrumentalist but has decided and has said to people in the class well I don't see any reason that I should be teaching children of plumbers when I've gone through my; I have such a huge background in performance and all of this enlightenment and why should I be teaching these lower class people who don't understand music ... now that's an awful attitude to have. There is also, well there is one guy who I just noticed today that actually quit school.(2A5:24/5)

Applied faculty typically view themselves as "performers" and wish to be, and are for the most part, seen by students as "performers". While they may be employed to teach these students, the teaching process is viewed as a function of a musician and thus does not in any way dismantle the view of themselves as musician-performers. It is probable that the school music teacher's quest for identification with the musician label stems from the same experiences and motivation. But one thing is clear, the students see the role of performance teachers as one of the chief agents in the denigration of music education as a worthy enterprise. These teachers often treat their own students differently when the student chooses music education. This report from Edmonton for example,

**How about your piano teacher?**

Well, she was fairly tough, ah.

**Who did you have?**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Okay.**

Yea and that's one, okay, I'll say that's one that sure treated them differently, the education students, oh yea, like you wouldn't believe.(E5:7)

The teacher's apparent control of repertoire for assignment to students was often seen by students as a signal that they were not either "required" nor often "allowed" to perform certain repertoire. This student wished to be removed from repertoire that seemed inappropriate. The professor relented.

**Okay. Once you made it clear to this voice teacher that you weren't interested in performance anymore, did her attitude change?**

Yea she sort of accepted it although it was understood that I had requirements to do and I would do what I had to do. I would do perhaps more a little more but I would not go out of my way to learn a quarter of an opera and perform it in an opera get-together because it was not what I was interested in like I have a Bellini opera I don't know any of that stuff.(A5:26/7)

Applied teachers appear usually to be the central source of advice on performance matters. Some students reported that their applied teachers were very antithetical towards the inclusion of music education into the plans of students. From MUN, this report,

**Were you advised to do this by anybody?**

No. Quiet the contrary actually.

**You were advised not to do it?**

Yes.

**By whom?**

By my [applied] teacher...not advised so much; She didn't say "Don't do it", but never encouraged and once you did decide to do it, it was sort of like "Oh, why are you doing those education courses." Well you know.(P7:32)

Still other applied teachers would take time away from education students to continue teaching the performance majors. This student from UWO recalls her experience.

**I still don't really understand "priority".**

OK, I'll give you an example. I went for my lesson one week, a lot of time I'll be sitting out there for an hour waiting for my lesson because she has another lesson there.

**Why would you go an hour early?**

No, I went on time and I had to wait for an hour and one time I was waiting for about a half an hour and I knocked on the door again and she said \*\*\*\*\*, I just can't teach you today, I'm listening to Rachmaninoff Preludes with this other student. You'll have to come back next week. It kind of made me made because I should get my lesson time, you know, if she want's to listen to Rachmaninoff Preludes with this other girl, she can do that on her own time or the other girl's time but not in my time.(M2-1:11)

From Covington (1984:81) we learn that,

Given our society's tendency to equate the ability to achieve and human value, it is not surprising to find that many students come to believe that they are only as good as their accomplishments.

Many performance majors begin to assume a position of self-worth<sup>16</sup> superiority based upon the official designation of "superior performer" by definition. Music education students soon learn that their worth as a human being may be challenged by individuals who are definitionally superior. Kingsbury (1984:266) writes concerning the nature of the view of performer that,

notions regarding the moral worth of the inner person [are] contrasted with the performance skills of the trained musician

It is important to emphasize, however, that the role of performance in the music school appears to be of paramount importance. Kingsbury (1984:128) writes,

The value of playing (or singing) "musically" is of genuinely sacred value in the conservatory, quite possibly the ultimate value.

Thus when the "moral worth" of an individual student is tied to the "ultimate value" activity, it is little wonder that music education students see themselves inferior as people in addition to just as a performer. These impressions are common among music education students and are reported regularly. For example,

**No, just sort of in the environment, you felt comfortable.**

For the most part except that when you're actually doing your practically subjects such as for me it was voice and piano. You're often made to feel or at least a lot of people have said this as well as myself: that because you're not in the B. Mus. program then you are somehow inferior to the B.Mus. students.(E7:8/9)<sup>17</sup>

It is very important to emphasize that here the student means "inferior" as a person, not just as a "performer". Other students report impressions of superiority among performance majors. From Vancouver this time another report.

Well yea, there's a lot of snobbery in there, yea, in that department, in that oh because they're in the music faculty they think they're far superior to students who are in the education faculty, but that doesn't necessarily mean that, you know that's the case especially for teachers, cause like I say, I know a lot of really good musicians, excellent musicians who have tried to teach and they were a failure cause they couldn't teach.(V13:7)

The defense reaction to these challenges will be discussed shortly. This student at U of A in Edmonton reports on the social alienation of music education students who were viewed by the B.Mus. students as not good enough to be associated with.

...in a lot of the courses I took it was the education students that always got the top marks not the Bachelor of Music and yet I don't know the profs just tended, I felt a lot of other people did too that well they got more attention than we did, and as far as the Bachelor of Music students, how they treated us it was like they were too good for us to even associate with us, a lot of them were like that.(E5:5)

In fact, the perception of performance majors as somehow otherwise superior was a common theme among those interviewed. Some even were able to verbalize their exact perceptions. From MUN there is this report.

**Did you get a sense that the performance major considered themselves as more worthy as an individual?**

Absolutely.

**Independent of just a better musician?**

Yes.

**just as a person?**

Overall, the musical ability that they perceived themselves having and usually spilled over into an impression of intellectual superiority for whatever reason, I'm not quite certain. Probably because they thought you poor stupid fools, you don't know what you are doing and I do. I may be guessing here now and this is how I perceive it and simply the fact that as in the musical world which pervades this place to greater or lesser degree depending on your point of view. They certainly perceives themselves as being much more valuable than just another music ed major.(P8:16)

Another report from MUN confirms this notion.

I mean you have to have goals to work towards and a I think if somebody is a fine performer that's great we should have that, we should encourage that. But the problem, I think, comes in when there's this clash of; I'm somehow inherently better cause I'm a fine performer than you are who are not a fine performer. I guess that's pretty well entrenched and I guess well we sort of talked in class to some extent about this versus the idea of education. But I mean through all your musical training, it's centred around performance and centred around competition; most especially in a city like this where you have a competitive music festival.(P2:16/7)

At UWO where the practice rooms with grand pianos are sought after by performance majors, this music education student who was a piano major reports her experience.

Yea but that when you have got just as much normal person, normal piano major in there it is like oh well I have time for a practice room now right, you know, excuse me for being lower form of life.... especially now since they are getting really picky that performance majors really the only ones to work on those grands because I love to work on a grand I have a grand at home. I am more comfortable than on those uprights, the new ones that they have there that they are having a lot of trouble with.

**So you feel like a lower form of life?**

The attitude some of the people show towards me yea.

**But how do they do that?**

Oh well she doesn't have to be here long she's not a performance major I have a recital to get ready for. So I'm not doing a recital maybe I'd like to perform too and there is sort of an air about them that generally they are interesting characters.(M4-9:45/6)

And from Vancouver this report that suggests that these feelings of superiority are not lost on those who make it into the classroom. This UBC student recounts this incident.

She's teaching music out in Burnaby and she was still actively involved in the community with music, she played with the Pacific Wind Ensemble, her husband teachers over in the music department bla bla bla and I casually brought up someone's name from the music department right and she goes oh well



they are a bit of a bozo anyway and I thought no they're not they're extremely bright, you know, and she goes well they can't play worth shit anyway and I thought you are judging somebody by their personality, their whole being, by who well they play their instrument, that's not an end all to me. You know, there is more to life than sitting down and pouring their guts out over some stupid piece, you know, I mean don't get me wrong I think music is really important but I would never judge somebody on how well they played.(V1:8/9)

As a group, music education students appear to have been ignored by some faculty members, other students, particularly where the students' official status as a music education student was unknown to others, kept this fact secret so that the student would not lose friends.

First a report about the faculty at Edmonton.

The students not so much but the faculty quite a bit especially when we went to talk about course changes and that kind of thing with the people up in the office in the music department, they were very hard to talk to because they didn't really, I don't know; acknowledge us, it was like well I've got a music student to talk right now, can you wait just a minute and it was like we were, I felt very put off.(E4:10/11)

Next a report from a student in Vancouver who experienced this prejudice against music education.

It's an attitude, it's kind of like a class attitude, where you have different classes of people or different walks of life, like maybe some academics might look down on people that do labour for them and that kind of, it's like a prejudice against

those people so what you come up against is when you meet someone, say for the first time, or talk to people in your classes some people may say, 'oh good, great to know you', that kind of thing, other people right away will ask, 'oh what are you in' and you say 'well I'm studying piano with so and so', or 'are you in performance', 'well no I'm general music', 'oh' and then they leave, they don't talk to you after that, they don't associate with you, you're not a performance major, you're not good enough.(V7:6)

Another student at UBC reports her fears that she would lose many of the people she associated with if her music education status were generally known.

I could sort of get away with it without really telling anybody I was going into education so I choose not to say it simply because I would lose 30 percent of the people that I talked to, pretty well.(V1:7)

This excerpt also shows the reader the ability of music education students to resort to deceit as a strategy to hide their official status wherever possible. Music education students perceive the music school as holding the performer superior to them. They resort to deceit to hide their status and make use of disclaimers about the notion that they are not able to play as well; thus defying the "official" definition of the superiority of the performance major. Where music education students do perform as well or better than performance majors, and there are many examples of this, the music education students take on some sort of "disidentifier"<sup>18</sup>

This UWO graduate maintains that, while wanting to be a teacher, there is no denying the possibility that the level of talent<sup>19</sup> between the performer and teacher may be equal. In his words the reports reads as follows.

**I thought you wanted to be a teacher?**

I do. But to my applied teaching that doesn't make any difference but educators can still have, I mean who says the educators can't have as much talent as performers.(A3:32)

Other students simply identify themselves with the performer group. While they may lack "official" designation, in their own mind they challenge the socially implied superiority. From MUN, this report,

So you....but there are a lot of them who consider themselves performance majors even though they doing the conjoint degree and the education part of it is just looked on as, you know, something they had to do to graduate.

**Why do you suppose they would want to do that?**

Because when they enter they have to do it. They are not accepted for the performance degree.

**But they still feel some pressure to be identified with that group.**

Yea.(P1:15)

Many other students consider themselves the performing equal of performance majors but have chosen education to "cover their butt"<sup>20</sup>. Nevertheless, they still feel obliged to defend the level of performance shown by music education majors. This graduate at UWO explains.

There's a lot of people in education that should have been in performance as far as their calibre of performing but they wanted to cover their butts. I'm one of them. I want to cover my butt. I want to perform, there's nothing that I've ever

wanted to do other than that and I'd like to teach also so I'm going to do both.(A7:20/1)

This UWO graduate explains that even the music education majors have been accepted into fine graduate schools to do performance, thus indicating the challenge to the notion that by definition they must not be as good.

**A lot of out of joint noses.**

Not a performance major as a principle player in the wind section which was the first time in God knows how many years and yes there were a lot of performance players who were out of joint but nine times out of ten a music education performer ... music education player yea I would say performer would be able to play it better than a performance player and that's holding up true right now because I know a couple of music education players who are continuing into performance programs and have been accepted to some of the finest places with some of the finest teachers all over the world so ? performance players are scrambling.(2A4:7)

Thus it appears that performing skill plays a significantly greater role in the operation of this community than any other status criteria largely because within this music community, performance prowess is tied to self-worth. Kingsbury (1984:10) writes,

there was in many cases a great deal of ambivalence, concern and social and intra-personal tension which related to the students' musicality with their most elemental sense of self and identity. The social environment was anything but pleasant for some of these people.

Kingsbury (1984:11) concludes with the statement that for him, the important point was, "the intensity of some students' concern for a sense of identity which was engendered by such matters" as these just discussed, and "correlative with this, of course, an ever-present weave of intensely competitive social relationships -- not only between and among students, but also between various faculty members".

The rather overt awareness of a general construct of "stigmatization" is an important category for this analysis. Of course, students who report a sense of "stigma" do so in a "common-sense" way. But there is a strong connection to the nature of the person and the performing ability and this is most powerfully constructed in the relationship between the person and music in general. We are reminded of Elliott's (1989b:12) position regarding the notion that "because music is, in essence something that people make or do, a people's music something that they are". Therefore if the music is judged, then concomitantly, the person must be judged as well. This has been a undercurrent of thought about artists in the sociological literature as well. For example, Silvers (1970:407)<sup>21</sup> writes about artists as follows,

Aesthetic immorality is commonly found in the context of asocial behaviour, which is a second type of professional deviance. As a general concept, asocial behaviour refers to activities which are the product of an incumbent's judgement to concentrate responsibility exclusively in his own social position. For example, there is the well known declaration "Art for Art's sake", which defines the autonomy of art and concomitantly, the autonomy of the artist's position.

The possibility that stigma may be "constructed" by professional experts is discussed in Scott (1970:258). He writes, "it is common knowledge among social scientists that stigmatizing conditions that are formally the same can have different

meanings to "natives" or laymen who are from different cultures of the world". Thus it is evident that within the cultural isolation of the music school, the view might be seen as meaningful that a certain group considers itself as "stigmatized". Following Scott's notion of professional impact on stigma (p.285) and that by Goffman (1961:386) who also stressed the impact that professional ideologies have on patients in mental hospitals when he writes that eventually they "must show acceptance of the place accorded them" in order to "get out of the hospital" or to "ease their life within it".

The most telling construct of the literature on stigma for this analysis is Goffman's (1963:44) notion of "disidentifiers". He defines these as signs that "tend - in fact or hope - to break up an otherwise coherent picture but in this case in a positive direction desired by the actor, not so much establishing a new claim as throwing severe doubt on the validity of the virtual one. Here we can see the attempts of the music education students to focus on these "signs" so as to break up a coherent picture of them as definitionally less able performers. Of course, because the music school requires performance from these students and as has often been stated earlier concerning the bond between music and personal "being", it is obvious that students may see an apparent opportunity to disclaim the idea that they are of lower "worth" as a person. Therefore we see in observing this group of students that they develop specific strategies to adopt these disidentifiers in the hope of removing or at least obscuring the stigmatizing condition of being a music education student. It may be important to remind ourselves in this instant of what Goffman (1963:108) writes,

It has been suggested that the stigmatized individual defines himself as no different from any other human being, while at the same time he and those around him define him as someone set apart. Given this basic self-contradiction of the stigmatized

individual, it is understandable that he will make some effort to find a way out of his dilemma, if only to find a doctrine which makes sense out of his situation.

In our case here, the music education students seem to adopt a doctrine that makes "talent" a "given" in the music school. Hargreaves (1972:20) develops an equation "ability + motivation = attainment" and in this metaphor, the music education students take "talent" in music as "ability" and that "attainment" as a performer is hampered by constraints on the realization of motivation. This is more fully developed in the section of this thesis on "talent" but it is a clear indication that the students seek to find a doctrine which offers a way out of their perceived stigmatized condition.

The next question to answer is "What is a musician?" If music education students consider "being a musician" as the most important "pivotal category" (Lofland, 1969:123) in their personal identity to achieve, it is necessary to see what, in their view, counts as a "musician". This becomes even more critical if they view full membership in the social inner circle of "musician" to be particularly troublesome to achieve and feel stigmatized because they are left as this "marginal" insider to the world of "real" musicians.

## Notes for Chapter Four

1. They typically do claim superiority in many instances, the most obvious in our context here is the attempt for UWO and the University of Toronto to square off with respect to their status as the best music school in Canada. It may be largely because of the proximity of these two institutions that they do not feel challenged by other major music programmes in Canada but one normally only hears comparisons of these two. Some faculties get external ratings such as business faculties and lay a claim on the basis of external agencies. In business, this has "real" consequences for their students in terms of hiring and entry level salaries. Thus the contest must not be underestimated.

2. for a more complete analysis of Institutional status see Martin A. Trow "The Analysis of Status" in Burton Clark, ed. (1984) Perspectives on Higher Education. p.132-164

3. "Classical" is to be taken here as the genre rather than the more musicologically correct "period" or "epoch" of music. It is generally understood as the music of Bach, Beethoven and Mozart rather than the music of U2, Black Sabbath or the Beatles. The genre of "jazz" is seen as a "single" category of music in the music school and is the point where "other" genres of music seems to have had a slight, however insignificant, infiltration into the music school.

4. It might be of interest to note that calls for more "pop" or "rock" have been made in the literature frequently. For example, Burnett, M. (1985) "The urgent need for "NOW" [Pop music in teacher training], Times Educ. Suppl. 3601:35-6, July 5. On the other hand, in USA we have such items as Dobbins, B (1987) "Jazz and Academia: street music in the ivory tower", Bulletin for the Council of Research in Music Education. 92/1-14, Summer. There is at least one study on the curriculum inclusion of "rock" at the college level but specifically for non-majors in music.

5. The students who make this claim usually base it on the assumption they make about the way the "real" or "outside" music world operates. If the music school is to be a "real" place, then it ought to operate on more worldly criteria rather than a sort of institutional protectionism model.

6. My continued use of "best" in inverted commas reflects the rather awkward way in which this system operates except to say that there appears to be many "best" teachers and students. This "ideal" pupil or teacher in Becker's terms must suggest that there are operationally some "invisible" boundaries (Cohen, 1985) around these constructs for the music students.



7. It is common for music students to admit that their worth as a person is tied to their "image" as a performer. More simply put - a good performer is a good person, a poor performer is a worthless human being. There are several specific references to this in the text and the reader must not be too quick to judge the earlier references to this idea.

8. Aside from this construct being "pulled" from the literature, it is important that the reader understand that the perception of "self-worth" is a construct that the students often use and is tied directly to their perceived performance ability.

9. Of course, this conflict is not limited to students. In Vancouver, there was a report of a student winning a chair in the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra in competition against his own university instructor.

10. Other similar terms for status rewards are "status symbols" or from Goffman (1963:43) "prestige symbol".

11. Stouffer, Samuel A. (1949) "A study of Attitudes" *The Scientific American*, Vol. CLXXX, p.13.

12. In North American universities it is common for post-graduate students to receive "TA's" (i.e. teaching assistantships) which often are tuition reductions and sometimes just plain cash payments for teaching junior undergraduate classes or lab sections of these.

13. This is not unlike the argument made by Becker (1960) in his article on "commitment" where he suggests that the "value" of certain "side-bets" rests with the definition or acceptance of these things as valuable to the particular sub-group to which they are applied. Thus in this situation, it is important that the "value" of these status points and their social efficacy are taken as "valuable" by the members of the music school community.

14. This is of course not an attempt to portray these other students in any particular way. Even a cursory examination of the university calendar will be enough to disprove the notion that these students are somehow not required to make music. All must have an applied major just as music education majors or performance majors must. The apparent social impotence of these other groups cannot be determined from the data collected for this research agenda.

15. "AR" refers to the Associate Performance Diploma from one of the Conservatories, typically The Royal Conservatory in Toronto or the Western Ontario Conservatory in London, Ontario. Some students in eastern Canada still take exams from Trinity College and the Associated Board in London, England but not typically students in Ontario. In western Canada, the Western Board serves this function.

16. This construct is one that students often use both in this study and is to be found in the same context in Kingsbury (1984). Covington (1984:81) uses the construct more

generally and refers the reader back to the other references to this notion of self-worth as a person being tied to one's apparent ability as a performer in the music school.

17. Music education students at the U of A are not candidates for a Bachelor of Music (B.Mus.) degree rather they are Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) students. At the other universities in this study, the students graduate with both degrees, usually after 5 years.

18. This is from Goffman (1963:44). Students attempt to break up the coherent image of themselves as the unworthy teacher by demonstrating superior performance skill. This even allows some to hide their "official" status.

19. "Talent" will be discussed in some detail later in this thesis. But for the moment it is important to show that it is used as a strategy to counteract the claim of superiority as an executionist.

20. see L'Roy (1983:131) music education as "insurance"

21. The reference to "Art for art's sake" comes from Albert L. Guerard (1936) Art for Art's sake. Schocken.

## What is a Musician?

**Ah, so musician is performance!**

Yes!(M4-2:8)

Students in music schools appear to want to be a "musician". In fact, it has been shown that the majority of status rewards in the music school are valued as, and reserved for, events that students identify as "musician activities" rather than "academic activities". The music education student must often challenge the notion that his activities do not legitimate his claim on a musician identity whereas other affiliation groups, specifically the "performance major" have the right to this legitimation apparently "by definition".

If students are able to act meaningfully towards this construct "musician", it should be possible to derive from them a definition of its usage in the music school. Students often expressed views that reflected their impressions of how society in general might apply the label "musician". This graduate of UWO explains.

I feel kind of silly you know, like last year, being in English, I got...sort of...my piano technique really went down and uhm...and I didn't play, I didn't have pieces memorized at the end of the year like I always had, so I tell people I'm in music, like at places where they work and stuff, but I used to hate when anybody asked me to play because you know, and here I am saying that I'm in music, and yet I wasn't...I didn't care to be doing any performances, you know and then I think I learned over the summer, this summer, that if you're going to call yourself a musician you'd better be able to play. Because people, the general public isn't going to have a lot of respect for you as a musician. And that's who you are dealing with when you're teaching.(A10:33)

It is perhaps generally expected that someone who calls himself a musician to be able to display some music-making skill. In some situations, there are more specific demands placed upon the construct<sup>1</sup>. For example, many school administrators assume that any reasonably competent music graduate would be able to play the piano<sup>2</sup>. This seems more prevalent in the lower schools where the school music programmes are typically non-instrumental in nature. But music students major in all the various orchestral instruments and many have very limited piano proficiency, despite the typical university requirement for a minimal performance level on piano for all instrumentalists and vocalists. Students who find themselves faced with the obligation to demonstrate piano skills where they are lacking or barely adequate nevertheless defend their label as a musician. This music education student at U of A makes this point.

**Is that a problem for you though.**

A little bit, yea, yea I always felt that they were better than me in piano. Oh yea.

**Why would that be important if you wanted to be a teacher?**

Well because I'm an musician too.(E5:29)

Students who elect choral music education often report their impression of being most threatened by this "occupational" requirement for being labelled "musician". Because the music school is a "closed" community, any external pressure for input into an acceptable definition by external standards seldom appears before the students reach the Faculty of Education. This student at U of A explains.

It bothers me to see music students, music education students, who cannot play the piano. And yet they have to go out into the school and accompany a choir like maybe but this is not a hundred percent certain. But they might be asked to. And they have what... they nothing... they no piano background at all, unless you are a piano major.(E6:5/6)

Of course, the piano major facing the instrumental class is challenged by the reciprocal fears. Many people believe that bands should be taught by teachers who majored on a band instrument (trumpet or clarinet rather than piano or violin) in university. The same holds true for teachers of string programs. They are often expected to be string players. Thus the term "musician" can be modified externally to be either instrument specific or perhaps ensemble specific. Thus piano majors are often assumed to have skills more appropriate to choral classes, trumpet majors to have band skills, and violinists to have orchestral skills. Thus in these situations, the label of musician seems less specifically critical. This piano major in Edmonton tells of her fears facing bands in the school.

With some people but with some people I feel disadvantaged.

**Why?**

Because I'm a piano major where I haven't experienced band as much.

**Right.**

And then some kids who are in this course they did band for like eons and they know it, it's ? band and stuff, it's really scary. Actually, I just finished my first practicum yesterday but it was scary going there with band without too much band experience.(E1:22)

Few people would argue that there are indeed certain ensemble specific skills which players of these groups learn simply by participating in these specific types of bands, orchestras or choirs. But these problems point out the insufficiency of a narrowly defined label "musician" in many situations.

One of the often stated goals of school music programmes is musical "literacy". That is simply stated that the musically literate person can read and write music. Thus to be considered a "musician", one first needs to be literate. This graduate at UWO recounts his experience in the schools with senior high school students who appear to him to have failed this test.

No. The kids really enjoy what they're doing and they really like their teacher and because of that they like to sing but I think they like it because he tells them quite often that they're wonderful so they feel really good about what they're doing but a lot of the senior students can't read music and if they can't sing off of the sheet of music they don't know what a time signature is.(2A5:11)

Another interviewee suggested that if "somebody in the neighbourhood wanted a piano player they could go to the music teacher at a school ...They'd expect that he could at least read some piano music."(M4-5:16) Other students were concerned that they couldn't sight-read well enough (M4-5:15) and that "reading" is perhaps the most important thing.

However faced with the situation reported below, students often admitted that there may be other acceptable definitions for "musician".

**I've talked to people here in Canada too that play in bars, like piano bars and I've got people who are good friends at home that play by ear, who don't read music hardly at all. Basically they're illiterate, but if I asked them what they are, they tell me a musician because that's what they make a living at.**

Yea this is true, you say that, yea but you can see there's two schools of being able to read music, to know the notes and then interpret and then other people who play by ear, one of my accompanist was just fantastic, he could read music and stuff, but what he could do with this, you know, just by ear was unreal and improvised nature, or whatever, qualities were unreal, I'm not, I can't improvise, I'm not very very good at that, but people who can hear things and then improvise I admire them greatly and I consider them musicians also, it's just a different way of going about it.(V11:25)

Literacy appears to be an important variable in the acceptable definition of "musician" in the music school. Some students still consider the "by ear-musician" an important part of their own definition for the label. But this student is typical of students in the music school who have cultivated the "by ear" abilities but feel nevertheless that the literacy requirements are more vital.

Fool around and play it by ear. Did whatever I wanted to do.

**Did you do a lot of playing by ear?**

Yea I still do. I wish I could play from music as well as I play by ear.(M4-3:6)

In fact, the official requirements for ear-training at UWO so challenged the students that these same students reported that many resorted to cheating to accomplish these musical tasks. There can be little question that the "literacy" model is the regnant acceptable construct in the music school. For one student, the idea that the aural skills of these so-called "musicians" were so weak was surprising.

Well that was the big thing. Keyboard harmony and ear training. I remember being amazed at how many people couldn't do ear training, how many people can't hear major third or minor chord.

**That surprised you?**

That surprised me. I didn't know people could be so tone deaf and yet be in music here. So lot's of them would have to cheap off somebody all year and then when it comes to the exam they can't cheat so their ninety-five that they got from cheating turns into a fifty-five after the exam.(M4-5:13)

Actually, many students at UWO described the cheating techniques used to survive the ear-training demands made on them by the institution. Some even implicated the teaching assistants who delivered the courses. It is apparent that certain aural skills are "officially" required but minimally present among the members of the community.



Further evidence that "reading" is the critically important variable in defining "musician" comes from students who report that the ability to simply extemporize on one's instrument was lacking among community members and that the fault for this deficiency rested with the lack of institutional demands. Students appear to have side-stepped the official demand for aural skill development at UWO. It is unclear whether institutional demands for this other musical skill would be more suitably mastered. This Vancouver student explains.

No, it's the way that they teach it, it's what they expect of you. How many guys in the music department can sit down and jam... can play?

**I don't know.**

Nobody, hardly anybody can because they don't teach that. That's not a valuable thing to do. Well, that's absurd. That's got to be the most valuable thing to do is to be able to sit down and play and make up something, be creative, improvise.(V3:22/23)

Actually, the whole notion of the music school as a creative place is challenged by the students. This report from MUN for example,

**Anything else? Any other preconception?**

Well, the creativity thing, I thought it would be more creative than it is. It's very actually very staid.(P9:5)

Some students actually operate at two different levels of creativity. The one satisfies the university's obligations and the second satisfies their own. This account about one UWO student enlarges on this point.

Yea, a lot of people do. xxxxx does, for example. This is the second year he's entered this young composers competition and he's won his category both times. So he does a lot. And there are people around here that just write and write and write. And some even read a lot of history, surprisingly, but they do.

**Does that mean he's likely to write this piece and not do his homework?**

No. I don't think so. These people are really high achievers and he always makes sure that his assignments are in. But he knows here to write it like they want...like they want this chord here and he puts it there. But at home he says I hate that chord and he doesn't put it there so he has two versions of everything.(M2-11:12)

Some students feel that some of their colleagues take music too academically. They see the study of music as equivalent to the study of any other subject and the students who feel this way often express the idea that there are students studying music who do not in fact like music. This challenge to their definition of "musician" is usually very puzzling to them. This UWO graduate explains.

Uh, ...I thought there would be, I like jazz, I thought there would be more interest in the students to play, uh, I don't think there is really and I think it might be because a lot of students had bad experiences in high school. People want to do music there's something about them that there not really excited about music you know, I think they almost treat that, that is treat music, the way I thought of other subjects, I thought you know if you're going to go, it's got to be hard and you know you're not really allowed to enjoy it really. I think there is really a bit of that kind of attitude.(A12:5)

This student continues,

I think that is an attitude I had then in 1st year and still do now. That people that come in here, or the music faculty here at Western anyway and I don't think they really enjoy music, at least not the way I do, because it seems to me it's more scholastic rather than get out your and play. I mean that's what I do, for instance, after uh... their final jury, so many people, or in the summer, people just put their horn away. You know. I keep thinking, 4 months you know, well...if you really love music and everything and you can play an instrument isn't that kind of..and it's to me kind of natural that you'd want to play your instrument because that's how you got started that's how you got into it. I mean, I wasn't in honours so last year when I was at school I did a 4th year but it wasn't an honours, so I didn't have to do a jury, didn't have to play my horn at all but I practised every day. But there are people who just put their instruments away. Either they do school work and everything but to me that's the thing I really love most about it is that I can play my horn. I find that a bit weird.(A12:5/6

This is not an isolated opinion. This reply to a direct question was not uncommon.

**Do you think everybody here likes music?**

No.(M4-1:28)

Other students even offered quantitative statements about this topic.

Music in general, yes I do enjoy it.

**And you think the other people here like it too.**

Most of them yea, 80% of them I would say.(M3-1:14)

Often students attribute the loss of the likability of music to the amount of practice required to satisfy the institutional demand. The "jury" represented the academic

performance for evaluation purposes and students were compelled to excel as much as possible here because not only did their academic standings but also the eligibility for admission to the performance major stream was determined by this performance. This fourth-year UWO student is convinced that, once out of the university, his love of music will return.

**So you practised to pass this jury right?**

Oh yah it's a bugger.

**What happens to all this love of music though?**

It's in there somewhere.

**But it seems to get buried up?**

With everything else

**Yah. Do you think it'll ever come out again?**

Oh yes, I think once I get out of here then I can maybe see things with a little better perspective .....(M4-2:2)

This notion that the "musician" label should be attributed to individuals who are serious or work hard is a particular favourite of students in the performance stream. In fact for some, the label would be assigned solely on the basis of hours on task. Although this may appear to be an unusual criteria, as will be demonstrated later, the notion that "talent" might be an important variable in the equation to produce the "musician" will be discredited. Thus students typically differentiate between observed differences in performing ability by pointing to the number of practice hours a student is willing to invest. Therefore time on task or the idea that performing be taken very

seriously by the "musician" becomes a very critical dimension to the definition. From Edmonton there is this excerpt which speaks to this issue.

Yea. The thing that bothers me a lot about what goes on in the music department is they have no respect for music education students, very little. Part of it is because they don't see the education students with the same type of courses, course load, content that they have. And to them music education students are not musicians. Like this is coming from them. This is not coming from me. But, it is coming from them. The attitude there is well if you can't do it; hack music there and you come over here. That's their approach...(E6:18/9)

While the taking of performing seriously may be an important variable, most students reported that the practice required to achieve an acceptable level of performance was of little or no interest to them. The usual response was that they "hated" to practice. Occasionally students would hint that perhaps music-making for oneself may be a criteria to be considered in the definition of "musician" but typically this seemed not to be so in the day to day interaction. This second-year student claims, for example,

Just because you don't perform all the time doesn't mean you're not a musician. I think you just do it for yourself.(M2-8:17)

While that may be an ideal for the "musician", on average students reported that music-making alone in the practice room was not a favourite activity and operationally one would have to challenge the notion that the definition of "musician" depended very substantially on the likability factor of practising, although much is made of telling everyone around that you are "off to practise". It appears as a "duty"

but nevertheless, one for which status can be accumulated. This excerpt explains the difference between the perception of performing and practising.

**But I hear so much of <I must go and practice> .**

Performing is the ultimate, practising gets everybody down. Performing is such a thrill. You get that appreciation from other people and that's something that everybody looks for no matter what you're in, appreciation from other people.(M2-3:15)

The transcripts are full of examples of students who would prefer not to practice. Some simply stated it bluntly as follows,

If I don't practice right after supper I don't practice at all. .

**You don't like practising?**

I hate practising!!

**I thought you liked music.**

I do like music.(M2-9:18)

Others claimed it started many years ago but continues to the present.

**So what did you dislike about the piano?**

It's, well when I was that age I hated practising, well I still do. But I hated to practice and my mother used to push me and I couldn't go out to play with my friends until practising was done. I hated it. You know, gorgeous sunny days and I'm sitting there playing on the piano. I was half decent but I just didn't like the discipline.(M2-4:2/3)

Some students even equate practising with some sort of emotional therapy to relieve pent up emotional stress. For example,

**Why didn't you practice?**

It was boring. I'd rather play the piece. I like to practice when I feel like it. I like to practice piano when I'm mad. When I've got nothing else to do I'll practice piano. You just can't say to me that at 7 o'clock you're going to practice for an hour.(M1-4:3)

Therefore music students cram for their performing juries in exactly the same way as any other student might spend an all-nighter before the final chemistry examination. Music-making is reduced to "work" which is not performed for oneself but on demand for others. Thus students who can display to others or simply tell others that they are regularly doing their "work" and practising on a day to day basis appear to be eligible for status rewards because they are working at being the "musician" that they all crave to be labelled. Thus it is not uncommon to observe students in the lounge make a reasonably large show<sup>3</sup> of the fact that they are "off to work" or "I must go and practice now". This would appear to validate their claim on the label "musician" and it must be surmised from this that the definition of "musician" for these students includes the component of "work". This student report shows the influence that the performing juries has on the availability of practice space in the music building.

**Is it hard to get a practice room?**

Well in the middle of the morning and all afternoon but it depends, the closer you get to juries, it gets impossible to get a room. I noticed that last year. At 6 o'clock at the beginning of the year you could always get a room but by jury time they were always full.(M2-10:15)

By far the most universal criteria included in the definition of "musician" by the music students was "performance". While some differentiated between "playing" and "performance", typically, the need to be actively participating in some form of music-making performance seemed to be an over-riding requirement. While other criteria were included like "knowledge" or "study", these were often negated as important by the next interviewee. The role of performance seems to remain undisputed.

Even in music education, students were aware that "performance" was the real entry ticket. It is important here to establish that even in the non-performance streams, music education, theory and musicology, that "performance" was seen by the students as a critically important criterion in the definition of "musician". This UWO graduate reports,

Music Education was performance oriented. The clarinet was the main way for me to get in, but I was looking for an more of a wider range of Music courses.(A4:6)

More specific to the actual definition is this report from a student at MUN.

**You think that had something to do with your musicianship?**

Yea. I guess so. Because as a musician you should be able to perform.(P1:11)



Another student offered this opinion about what constitutes a "musician".

I think performing is important. To me that's what music is eventually what music is all about, all about performing and listening I mean, the two go hand in hand.(A12:16)

In order to test the importance of "performing" as a universal requirement for the definition of "musician", a typical line of questioning during the interviews became one where students were asked to apply the label "musician" to various faculty members, particularly those with non-performing responsibilities in the music school. These were usually the musicologists and theorists. Since many of these professors seldom do much, if any, public performing, they served as a convenient test case for the application of the label "musician". Generally the response was as follows.

**Did you ever give any thought to the fact that other people in the building should have been performing too and maybe weren't?**

The history people. Yes, I do. Because if they are musicians, they should be playing.(A12:16)

Some students differentiate "performance" from "playing". This usually means that while both require "playing", "performance" requires an audience. Some students wished to become very good "players" which is still an acceptable criterion for "musician" while at the same time were less than enthusiastic about public performing. For example,

**OK What's your goal.**

My goal. I guess to learn as much about music as I can. To attain the highest level as I can.

**Highest level of what?**

Performance.

**Is that important as a teacher?**

Yea, I think so.

**Why?**

If you can't perform, how can you teach other people to perform.

**How many people in the music ed. faculty perform?**

I don't mean to perform like in front of a whole bunch of people, I mean like playing-wise.(M2-1:18)

Asked why they came to study music in the first place, many students reported that they came to study "piano" or "trumpet" or whatever their principal performing instrument was. Even those who intended a career in music education typically admitted to a strong interest in studying their major applied instrument. This excerpt from MUN is typical.

**So when you came, did you come to study music?**

Yes.

**Why did you come to study music, specifically. Not just because you had done it all the time but what did you come to study about music?**

Well, I came to study the piano, which was my main instrument, of course, at that time...always has been.(P5:1)

Thus it is not unusual to find students equate "musician" with performing and that with the study of their major instrument. This example from MUN demonstrates this well.

**What was important to you when you first came?**

To music school?

Yes.

Singing.

**Anything else?**

Performance.

**Which is the same thing in another word?**

Yes(P7:16)

Occasionally the academic studies included in the music programme (musicology and theory) are recognized as a component of the "well-rounded musician". That, of course, did not raise any significant enthusiasm from many students. For example,

I really don't like doing those kinds of scholastic things, I just really like playing my horn. I think it is really...probably one of the biggest downfalls is the fact that I really like playing my horn and I don't like doing a lot of heavy history and things like that although I think they're important to a certain extent although I think you can still be a good musician although not totally rounded musician...(A12:25)

In fact, a typical response was that these academics actually interfered with the ability to concentrate on more important performing activities. This report from Vancouver was not at all atypical.

Unfortunately, they're were a lot of extra courses that you have to take because music is part of the arts faculty, so you have to take English and I had to take three languages and you know all that stuff.

**That's sounds like a reasonable thing for an singer to do?**

Well Language is fine, I enjoy that, but I sometimes felt like spending all that time on an academic subject was taking away from the practice because really as an performance major you're expected to be doing four or five hours an day, practice, personal practice time and that was really hard to find that time you know.(V10:6)

Although "performing" appears to be central to the definition of "musician", not all performing "counts" in the view of some. This report suggests that only "solo" performing held much value<sup>4</sup> and thus contributed substantially to the acceptable definition of "musician". From a UWO graduate, this opinion,

I was, I didn't have my priorities straight basically, she thought. I was doing a lot accompanying of vocalist, instrumentalists and that kind of thing, which is great experience as far as I'm concerned musically or whatever, and she thought it was all that extra accompanying was bad and she didn't want to sign my accompanying forms that you have to do for credit and all this. Because she thought I should be spending my time on the piano repertoire and you know and I was going, excuse me, I'm learning an heck of lot more by accompanying that I would sitting here playing the Ballades or Etudes..... working on my scales up and down and that kind of thing.(A6:38)

The performance prowess of an individual is simply understood as the major determinant of the label "musician". This U of A student was able to express it as succinctly as anyone interviewed.

You don't play as well, you're not a real musician, because you're in education and that kind of an attitude. It's there, it's an undercurrent in that department.(E7:9)

Perhaps this is why the music education students are so willing to fight to be seen as adequate performers. One might suppose that "performance" was viewed by students as some sort of aesthetic expression or emotive opportunity where they might really "make" music. However, music students view "performance" almost exclusively in terms of "technique". They negotiate their role as a "musician" by demonstrating that they are playing ever more difficult pieces technically, simply stated - more notes! In fact, much is made of this in the negotiation process and will be discussed in greater detail later. But the label "musician" depends to a large degree on the perception of a level of performing ability and that ability is perceived as a function of technical prowess. In fact, students usually take on a role as critic when they attend concerts and their conversations after concerts typically centre around the "technique" of the performer once the serious critical conversation begins. Because so many students attend music school concerts to support their friends, there is a certain reserve from many of the audience but the faculty concert is still a technical proving ground for many. This UWO student explains.

Oh wasn't the Beethoven wonderful and blah, blah, blah. The same kinds of things. It was a wonderful concert. I think that

was too fast or whatever. Just music talk. Not everything is negative. You kind of look at things as to whether you approve or disapprove of stuff in relation to technique.(M1-6:16)

The common thread that binds the definition of "musician" together is "performance". Even where performance has been given a back seat such as in musicology and theory, students still regard these majors as "musician" because they are all required to perform. While the level of performance seems to play an important role, the fact that everybody is required to play is more determinant. This explanation from a fourth-year student at UWO explains.

**What profession comes out of here? Medicine is a professional school, doctors come out of there, what comes out of here?**

Music educators, historians, composers, performers people like that.

**Not just musicians?**

Oh yea we are all musicians.

**Even the historians?**

Sure.

**How come? They don't make any music.**

Sure they do. When you're in this program, for instance, you have to perform you have to play an instrument so I've heard I don't know.(M4-6:13)<sup>5</sup>

Often students expressed the opinion that this early performance interest or requirement was sufficient to allow the musicologist access to the label "musician"

which they now retain largely because of their "knowledge". This excerpt enlarges on this point.

**I mean, do you consider them musicians or not?**

Yes

**Why?**

Because they have profound knowledge of music and probably would have started somewhere. I would think the first inclination who have interest in music was to listen to it and then probably play it.(M4-2:6)

In other professions, such as medicine or law, the first requirement for access to the professional label "doctor" or "lawyer" depends upon holding an appropriate degree from a recognized institution. This becomes a "legal" claim to employ the "label" usually through a recognised "Qualifying Association" such as the Canadian Medical Association. This association exists in order to confer a "legitimate" right to practice and also "to control entrance to the profession"<sup>6</sup> The issue in the case of the "musician" seems to be the right of Self to adopt this "identity" which seems conferred or withheld during interaction with Other and which also appears never conferred as a once-and-for-all category as with a Qualifying Association but is continually to be negotiated through the critical reaction of Other during social interaction. This then is in effect placing musicians in a different relationship to Others in their claim to recognition as status, identity or publicly conferred "label" to such other categories as doctors or lawyers and other traditional professionals. In fact, the musician seems to be the university graduate whose "degree status" has no bearing at all on access to professional work in the direct field of graduation. Orchestra posts and solo performing contracts are simply not won by means of the "degree status" but

on a fairly rigorous audition tradition. Actually, applicants for these contracts are seldom even given an opportunity to demonstrate to the contract giver that the applicant even has a degree. However, despite the attendance at one of these institutions, university music students do not consider a degree necessary for the definition of "musician"<sup>7</sup>. They do, however, differentiate between different kinds of "musicians" as has been pointed out earlier. But certain students allow the non-performing musicologist access to the label "musician" while at the same time acknowledging their distance from performing.

**So you're only a musician if you have a degree?**

No, no.

**So you can't use that.**

Right. Uh oh.

**This is not a trap right? But I am interested in what you call a musician. Because we often have to account for the guy, the Blue Billy Banjo player, who is ultra-musical and who definitely does not have a Western degree, but you would say that he's a musician?**

Sure.

**How does the musicologist survive in this?**

.....They're not a musician in the sense that they have direct contact where they're performing or composing or something but they still have to know music to be able to write about it.(M4-6:16)

Not all students hold this view. For many, one either plays or one does not and this foolishness about book writing may be important to some but it simply does not



qualify a person to claim the label "musician". For these students, knowledge alone cannot define the label.

**I'm trying to figure out what a musician is.**

I'm sort of going out saying it's right, but in my opinion if you go in and or if you're just, you spend your life reading books and researching music you know or different styles of music and everything to me that's not a musician.(2A6:36)

Previous performing experience as opposed to current performing activity often counts in the definition. This memory of playing constitutes an understanding of what it was like. Thus the applied teacher who used to play in the past may still be recognized as a fine "musician" because this person still "understands" what is required. This graduate from UWO explains.

And he was the best teacher I ever had. He still remembers you know, so even if he doesn't play any more I think he's still a musician, because if he looks at a piece of music he can still understand what he has to do.(A12:21)

One scale of assessment for the "musician" would appear to be performing prowess. Students absorb the outcome from the academic requirements into their definition of "musician" by using a different scale of assessment<sup>8</sup>. This is usually described in terms of "well-rounded" or "complete" or some other descriptor which indicates that they view the "knowledge" as somehow important but often not essential. Many students for instance commented that much of what they were taught in early music history was a total waste of time because it was not directly relevant

to what they were practising and performing. Singers were often the most colourful and would point out that while Gregorian chant may be an interesting academic exercise, they sang Puccini. So for many, the definition of "musician" grew in the music school as the student advanced in his career as music student. The notion of academic knowledge and the music teacher is very important. If the teacher of music cannot simply borrow the "knowledge" of music as a teacher of science might do with scientific "knowledge", then the teacher of music must be a "musician". The inclusion of the academic knowledge was absorbed and the definition was acknowledged to be more comprehensive. This fourth-year student at UWO offers this account.

**Did you think of yourself as a musician when you came in here?**

Not like I do now.

**What changed?**

I learned so much more while I was here than what I had known before I got here. Well before i got here it was mostly all performing, like it is with probably a lot of people when they first got here but then after you get here you go through all the theory and history and stuff you find you know a lot more about it other than just performing.

**What do you know?**

What do I know? Well like I said all the theory and the history behind the music we perform.(M4-6:17/8)

Other students differentiate the "musician" from the "well-rounded-musician", themselves being the latter of course. The inclusion of the academic knowledge into

the definition of "musician" for these students simply elevates themselves from the position where they might be considered just "players".

**So what constitutes a musician?**

The knowledge of the theory, the history and the practical side.

**So the guy who plays in a club professionally who makes his living at playing but who may not read music or for sure never have had a music history course just wouldn't qualify.**

He can play but he's not a well rounded musician. A well rounded musician should have a knowledge of all these aspects and know why he's playing what he's playing or know how it came to be.(M2-12:2)

The inclusion of the academic knowledge into the definition provided students with the ability to be confident about playing in the right style or with an appropriate sound or otherwise in a way that demonstrated that they understood that music performance had a right or wrong way about it. This is consistent with their view that playing is mostly a technical thing and how the repertoire is performed is a knowledge criterion. Many may dispute this dichotomy and claim that many fine performers have learned all of this in an applied lesson. There is still a sector of the community which holds that these aspects, from wherever they may be derived, constitute an important variable to determine the definition of "musician".

**So being a good musician is the same as being a good performer.**

No, no that's only, I'm only talking about playing your horn, that's only part of it.

### **What's the other part?**

I think uh...a lot of it is knowing repertoire, and that is all learned, you know, memorizing or knowing what certain music sounds like stylistically or historically, the proper way to perform a piece from a certain time period, that's also something that's learned.(A12:11)

In the music school, what counts as a "musician" is first a "performer". Without the trumpet in the hand, most will deny the application of the label. If, on the other hand, it can be demonstrated that the person has had some experience and is now relying on an increased "knowledge" about music, some students will assign the label "musician". The definition of "musician" is broad and accommodates others outside the community who do not satisfy all the internal community criteria, but these types of "musicians" are not "well-rounded" nor seen as capable of intellectualizing about stylistic matters. The knowledge of popular styles and their performance practice seems to go unnoticed in comparison to the implied superiority of knowledge about Bach, Beethoven and Brahms<sup>9</sup>. Thus the attendance at the university with its academic demands concerning classical music, adds to the status value of being a classical "musician", i.e. performer and this well-rounded model elevates the music student from the general public view that a "musician" is simply someone who can "toot a flute".

Because the definition of a "musician" seems to be so diverse and lacking any substantial consensus, it might be suggested that there are infinite varieties of musician, each with a slightly different compositional configuration with perhaps "invisible boundaries"(Cohen, 1985) which are taken as meaningful for each of the students seeking to be identified or labelled by the Others. This is an important point

since without an acknowledgment of this infinitely variable definition of "musician", the reader might suppose that the student was seeking to be labelled as some pre-established social category for which the student was trying to satisfy specific requirements. The position here of course is just the reverse. The definition is derived from the social actions of the students rather than viewing the definition as causing the students' social action (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973).

### Kinds of Music in Relation to Identity

Much of the definition of the "musician" in the music school has to do with the genre of music that the students concern themselves with. It is necessary therefore to unpack the concept of what counts as "music" in the music school.

Music education students report that they are expected to learn at least as early as the entrance audition that "classical" music is the only "real" music. Just as in their socially defined version of "musician", the music education students appear to allow for a significantly wider definition than the "official" one which the music school seems to sanction. Many music education students believe that it would be bad enough if the music school simply took the "classical" literature and told students that, although a very narrow view, the position that the music school held was to do justice in such a few short years to one genre and that was all that was reasonable. But the students believe that the music school presumes much more<sup>10</sup>. Not only is it a "classical" den, but students see it as one which preaches against all other forms of music.

To begin with, some documentation for the "classical" only perspective.

**There are other kinds of music on the go. Why not have a barbershop chorus a school? I am sure you can't learn much about that.**

No, no. Well, that is something that we are not prepared for. Even in the music ed. program I can remember one of my professors even saying "have classical, just classical". He more or less said don't even touch the other stuff. Nobody agreed with him at the time. I still don't agree with him. I don't know what he was trying to do. (2A10:27/8)

Even in formal addresses, music students are warned off of association with "pop" music. But even here, the students believe that there is another position. Like in the previous example where the students did not agree with the professorial position, here the student reports the faculty's admonition on graduation.

That's what it seems like, I mean, I only have my suspicions but I really feel that they ... and when I graduated in the summer we had the general big convocation up here and then we went down and we had some music awards. {The Dean} said something to the effect of I hope you treasured music, treasure classical music and I forget whatever else he said ... hold it up high and don't see pop music as the end and I thought that's really kind of a funny thing to say especially since, I mean, if you take a kid who's in high school to him music has got to be something so much different than it was to a person like Beethoven.(2A12:25)

And finally a simple statement about the exclusive "classical" music school.

Not like that, no I mean well classical music is the only thing over there", which is fine, but that's not what all the kids listen to and yes I like to introduce some of the kids to some of the aspects of classical music, but if there getting enjoyment from something like jazz, like over there they have no jazz...(2A7:35)

This comes as little surprise considering the definition of "musician" that this community appears to use and the "classical" bias is generally well known in the music school community. The audience that attends the various concerts at the music school would certainly attest to their general "classical" expectation.

But for the purposes of this analysis, it is necessary to dig a little deeper to see whether, like with the definition of "musician", there are allowances made or expected by certain members of the community. Who actually holds this exclusive view about the kind of important music? There is no question that the "classical" genre is seen by students to be held up officially as the only worthy form of music. Beyond that, the classical genre is subdivided into various types, each with its own degree of "worth". For example, the more technically difficult a piece of music is to perform, the more "worthy" or valuable it is seen to be, because of the significantly more status points available to the students who performs it. Thus students who are attempting to play difficult pieces gain status in the community and students are never very clandestine about playing difficult pieces. In fact, as part of the negotiation process they often overtly carry music around which they are not playing or for that matter, may not even be capable of playing. Thus it is little surprise to hear a student report that a teacher refused her lesson time because the teacher was engrossed with another student who was playing Rachmaninoff preludes.

Implied, of course, is that the offering that the next student might make would be a lesser worth or importance.

**I still don't really understand "priority".**

OK, I'll give you an example. I went for my lesson one week, a lot of time I'll be sitting out there for an hour waiting for my lesson because she has another lesson there.

**Why would you go an hour early?**

No, I went on time and I had to wait for an hour and one time I was waiting for about a half an hour and I knocked on the door again and she said \*\*\*\*\*, I just can't teach you today, I'm listening to Rachmaninoff Preludes with this other student. You'll have to come back next week. It kind of made me mad because I should get my lesson time, you know, if she wants to listen to Rachmaninoff Preludes with this other girl, she can do that on her own time or the other girl's time but not in my time.(M2-1:11)

Varying degrees of technical difficulty is but one example. "Modern" or "contemporary" music is not generally appreciated by students and has, as a consequence, apparently little value in the music school. Because it does not resemble Mozart, this student finds little use for this new music. In fact, sounding like Mozart becomes a relative criteria which places such well-known rock stars as Tina Turner closer to this student's idea of a centre line than much of what passes for modern "classical" music.

There might be but I don't understand it. It seems like all the pieces that were composed last year, like they have a composers' show here, and all the pieces that were produced were really weird, I mean they had people hitting their



instruments instead of playing and it's just like a child came along and banged on the piano but there must be some kind of discipline. But I don't understand it.

**Why is it that when this event comes off, there are 35 people at the concert, 34 of who have a piece being played. But when Tina Turner comes to town you can't get one of the 35,000 tickets for sale?**

That's because Tina Turner's music is a lot closer to Mozart than she is to this stuff. I mean she doesn't have this weird stuff. I mean I was worried about some of their instruments the way they were hitting them. I mean the cello is valuable.

**Nobody has ever told me Tina Turner sounds like Mozart before.**

Well I don't say she sounds like Mozart just that she's closer to...she has...I mean if you listen to most popular music it's a I-IV-V-I half of the time with a few extra chords thrown in, that's Mozart, I-IV-V-I. That's not contemporary cello music, which is no chord and maybe we may come to a cadence, maybe.(M2-11:13/4)

Students learn quickly what to expect in the music school and what might be acceptable.

**Do you find it unusual that this Faculty ignores all the other kinds of music totally?**

Other than classical? Yea. I mean there has probably never been a banjo in Von Kuster Hall or anything like that. They might get a Swing Band or maybe a Jazz band. Well we did some Canadian Brass music last year, but that's all classical, well mostly classical. Like I'm not going to say bring in a country band because probably nobody would go.(M2-10:14)

Some students just give up after making the determination that any positive display for other types of music is not acceptable.

I remember that when I was first there. I think I got to the point where it was like who cares. Like I have different types of music that I listen to and I listen to and really enjoy a lot of pop music and country I play on stage cause I need the money and I have gotten to enjoy it quite a bit and if they want to talk like that then just let them. I've decided to just think that way after second ... first year the middle of first year it's like people they don't want to hear anything about even the real old not the real old but the real rock and roll, if they don't that's fine ... that's up to them.(2A5:8)

Other students point out that the university has totally ignored major trends in music during the last few decades. Programmes and content can be extremely current is one only considers one genre and that only to the beginning of the century. This graduate of UBC explains.

I do have problems with that. I am not really super critical about it. But I do question it and that is simply because so many things have happened musically within the last twenty years we have had a major movement in music in terms of pop and rock. When the Beatles came the schools never touched it. They haven't touched anything. We are still doing stage band. I mean that's music from the 20's, 30's, 40's, 50's. (V3:9)

More recent trends in electronic musical instruments<sup>12</sup> have also been ignored by much of the university world. Although students claim to be interested in this new equipment, the music school resists any intrusion on its definition.

### **Does it bother you that this Faculty doesn't do that?**

I've noticed that they don't. I think there's a lot of people that would like to be more involved with computers but there's always two sides. I've noticed for example that you can do all you want with a computer but it's not the same as doing it on an instrument. It's kind of hard to explain but I know a lot of people here would like more computerized things like synthesizers and things like that. (M2-6:5)

If the definition of worthy music includes only references to the "classical" repertoire, it would be unlikely to expect much emphasis on any creative work in music by the students. Other people's notes<sup>13</sup> which have stood the test of time become ever so more important than the manipulation of musical materials for the purpose of creating some sort of artistic product. This response is typical to the question considering any observed creative activity.

### **You didn't do much with the faculty, did you?**

Oh God, no. The most creative thing I remember doing was with xxxxxxxxxx in first year, we had a little band, one of our courses you had to take an instrument you had never taken before and I was learning clarinet and he had us, he had the percussion and that do a rhythm and improvise and we each had to take two bars and improvise and just play whatever notes that we felt could fit in and that was a riot, it was a lot of fun, it was the only thing...(2A11:23)

In fact, students often expressed concerns about the apparent lack of creative music-making. This student from Vancouver places the blame squarely on the music school. But if this music is seen as unworthy, why would the music school be interested in it?

No, it's the way that they teach it, it's what they expect of you. How many guys in the music department can sit down and jam... can play?

**I don't know.**

Nobody, hardly anybody can because they don't teach that. That's not a valuable thing to do. Well, that's absurd. That's got to be the most valuable thing to do is to be able to sit down and play and make up something, be creative, improvise.(V3:22/3)

Not only are the students critical of the apparent lack of acceptable genre alternatives and lack of creative playing skills, they also see what is held as worthy for them to be music which is totally out of their own social context. This situation is similar to the argument made by Vulliamy (1978) when he writes of culture clashes in the classroom. This Memorial student explains.

Because they follow a chronological pattern. It starts with more or less Gregorian Chant and it was something that I had never been exposed to before it was totally new to me I was more interested in at the time I was a lot interested in pop and jazz even less not so much classical or Baroque and this Gregorian Chant was sort of thrown at us and it sort of threw me a curve and I couldn't get up the interest in it. (P10:7)

This report from a UWO student shows that the "classical" genre is viewed as totally separate from other forms of music. Furthermore, the other styles are presented as "evil". This plays an important part in the creation of an acceptable idea of what music is worthy.

That's true. Everybody just gets the impression that classical musicians are totally separate from rock and jazz. And that I also got from back in high school. My two teachers, well they would joke around and say that rock was the root of all evil.(M2-6:15)

What appears to disturb the students most is not the fact that the music school ignores other forms of music performance but that it but that it lacks any respect for them.

Uhm ... that never really bothered me because the kind of things that I wanted to do in music weren't happening in the faculty of music anyway, you know.

#### **Jazz.**

Yea, I mean, I really liked that and I just don't like the attitude that some people have. That doesn't even bother me that a lot of it isn't happening there it just bothers me that people don't respect the art form just like they don't respect pop music and I think pop music I mean, ? to you until I'm blue in the face I think pop music there is something to pop music maybe we don't study it as much because in terms of theory there is not a lot to gain from it, if you study it in terms of theory then whatever. But I still think it's an art form and I don't like the fact that people just kind of [...] dismiss it. (2A12:19/20)

Some students lose the battle and give in to the music school bias. But often this creates feelings of guilt because intellectually they feel like they should be able to engage in other forms of music which the music school have denigrated.

Yea and I say why should it and maybe, if you ask me, I don't think pop has as much to offer in terms of a lot of the things like theory, form and all that kind of thing and compositional techniques and all that kind of stuff but it bothers me when a ... I can listen to it a pop tune or whatever you want to call it and if it's stirs an emotion in me then I sit down and ... why can't ... because it makes me feel guilty or it makes me feel bad about liking music, you know, they make me feel bad about liking pop music or liking jazz, I mean the thing about it is a great thing. (2A12:24)

In fact, all other kinds of music appear presented as evil or tainted. The puritan ethic evolves and students admit that they do indeed listen to "bad music". The point is not whether the music is "bad" but that students come to express themselves in a way which indicates they have adopted this attitude.

But, I can't think of a lot of people who don't listen to bad kinds of music. I can't even think of anybody off hand. Except perhaps the one that quit. (2A10:30)

For some students like this one in Vancouver, the notion of labelling other forms of music as wicked is completely indefensible.

Yea, but they don't know that. They look at their classical music...and say this is the centre of the universe. This other music is all prostitution; it's all terribleness. (V3:13)

The "worth" of other music appears central to the organizational context of the music school. In order to validate one's claim as a musician, it is important to use the appropriate genre of music. This illuminates the necessary comparison between the various styles that might otherwise appear. Thus "worth" becomes an expression about the "opinion" concerning other musics.

I think I'm trying to say that it's not less worthy but you say to somebody, I was brought up on country music and they say "Oh God!" because that's just their opinion of country. (M2-10:11)

And finally we see that the outcome for students who do associate themselves with the less worthy forms of music becomes one of belittlement in the applied lesson. One does not gain fewer status points but loses them outright for acknowledging this affiliation.

**Do you think he treated the general music students any different than he did the performance people.**

Yea, I think he did. I think he taught, I think he, he had kind of a snide side to him. He knew that I played popular music and he personally wasn't a fan of it. He used to make comments about a bottle of beer sitting on your piano and things like that. And I mean that's the way it was, so I just laughed at him.(V9:8)

Few students appeared to have the strength to challenge a teacher in this way. Since so many of the point gaining opportunities are tied to the discretion of the applied teacher, students typically tried to form as close an attitudinal tie to their

teachers as possible. This student admitted to being a bit of an outsider in any case as he played regularly in "pubs" and "clubs" thus complicating his need for definitional status as a "musician" inside the campus community.

Status appears accumulated according to the genre of music with which students affiliate themselves. "Classical" music predominates. "Weird" new classical music is generally excluded. "Technically difficult" classical music is the most worthy, if played "musically" or implied to be in the repertoire of students. Pop, rock, country and other forms of popular culture are not "worthy" forms of music and any affiliation is seen as poisonous and rather than resulting in lesser status gains, it results in status loss.

Aside from a discussion as to the genres of music which seem to contribute to the identity construction, one other aspect of "performance" that seems critical is the nature of "standards" and how students make sense of performance "standards" in the music school.

### Performance Expectations

In general, music education students seem to work very long and hard to meet the requirements set out for them by the university. The amount that they are required to do varies from institution to institution somewhat, where, for example, concert attendance at MUN is obligatory and optional at UWO, but each programme requires a mixture of academic courses such as musicology and theory as well as other courses in applied music, either on the students' major performing instrument or on other



instruments required for music education courses which prepare them to teach in a band or orchestral setting. All music students are also expected to spend a considerable amount of time in performing ensembles such as the various university bands, orchestras, choirs and smaller chamber ensembles. In addition to this, students are expected to practice often many hours a day on their principal performing instrument. The premium performing groups are also touring groups and students who participate in these often miss regular academic time to participate in these trips and last minute rehearsals for even local concerts can consume many hours of extra time beyond what might be expected by a cursory examination of a time-table. Furthermore, masterclasses with visiting artists are not uncommon and a whole or half-day may often disappear to accommodate these activities. Many students actually abandon their studies in music for this reason. This graduate explains.

**Do you know why she didn't want to do music any more?**

Well I think the workload in music was really atrocious. That's something that in all honesty I kind of resent.(A10:9)

In fact, the drop-out rate is significant at some institutions like UWO. This is rather curious when one considers the demands made upon students to gain entrance in the first instance. This will be dealt with later in more detail but it must be pointed out that many students appear unable or unwilling, for whatever reasons, to continue their studies. In a discussion on this point with a third-year UWO student the following ideas surfaced.

**How many people are no longer with you that started out?**

Well they say that they let 150 in and tops there is a 100 tops. Between 80 and 100, I mean, we lost a lot from first to second year along with Christmas there were a lot gone.

**Do you think that's reasonable considering the demands they make to let you in?**

That's a really good question because you might be thinking if they were more strict with who they let in they wouldn't be letting so many people go. Is that good? Well if gives you a chance to try and then if you got what it takes you make it, if you don't you know, whereas if they were far too selective and people that would want to try perhaps wouldn't get that chance.(M3-6:4)

In fact however, students must present themselves for an audition and perform at some acceptable standard which the university is able to set for itself and that standard is typically rigorous enough that those who manage to gain acceptance would have had to have made a considerable commitment<sup>14</sup> long before attempting to audition for the music school. This is an anomaly on Canadian campuses. Students wishing to enter any other profession such as medicine or law or nursing or engineering would need only appear at the doorstep of the university with adequate high school grades and be admitted. There is no requirement to have studied law or medicine or whatever before applying to the university. Even in the case of a student who wished to study to become a history or science teacher, decent high school leaving grades would likely in every instance suffice for university entrance. But this is not typically the case in music. While some students do gain admittance with only their secondary school background, the grades submitted to the university in no way eliminate the requirement that students present themselves for an entrance audition. Not only must students have invested a great deal of time in developing individual music skill<sup>15</sup>, the university challenges those skills with an entrance audition. Having

said all this, it is important to realise that still substantial numbers of students leave the programme. This next excerpt reaches closer to the student's most common opinion.

**Let's change topics a bit. How many people are in third year now?**

80 or 90

**How many were in first year.**

160

**What happened to the other 50% then?**

Well they decided they didn't want to conform to the program or they realised that this isn't what they wanted to be in.

**But look at all the time it took to get in with auditions and stuff.**

Well it's a tough standard in this faculty. They like to set standards and they want to be...they want to have a reputation as a university so the people graduating have a reputation of being good.(M3-7:6)

The idea that the university has a "standard" is a curious notion among the students. Collectively the remaining students appear to believe the idea presented in the preceding excerpt. At UWO there is a long history of assigning the exit performing standard to the Conservatory Associate diploma. Although this formal requirement was abandoned in the early 1970's, the students still are locked onto a standard of difficulty that is determined by the technical requirements of the Conservatories. This third-year student explains.

I don't think so, not that I know of right know. There's one guy that he came in here with his associateship, so obviously I mean he's already met the graduation requirements before he even came in here.(M3-1:19)

The idea of any formal ties to the conservatories at UWO died out as more and more American faculty arrived in the early part of the 1970's. The Conservatory system which Canada adopted from the British is largely unknown to the Americans and their unfamiliarity and lack of control led them to initiate the removal of such external factors at the music schools. The argument was at that time<sup>16</sup> that an external body should not be able to determine whether or not university students should be able to graduate or not. Until this time, the Associate performing diploma was in fact a graduation requirement for the university. This was the result of historical political ties that had survived beyond the development of the Faculty of Music at UWO. Almost all of the senior examiners for the Conservatory were members of faculty at the university. It was, therefore, an externally administered examination adjudicated by the same people as were examining students within the institution. The argument was nevertheless not of duplication but one of external influence. The rejection of this external examination allowed the universities to close their societies even more and thus they became totally able to determine their own "standard" for performance inside the community.

This next excerpt is a discussion with a first-year student who is looking forward to a tough new teacher who will pressure her into producing. But, as early as the first week in the music school, she admits to knowing about this mythical "standard".

**I thought you were here because you liked music. Why is it so important now that you find someone else to satisfy who will tell you it's good?**

Because if you make them feel good about what you are doing, then you'll feel good about what you're doing.

**So you need somebody else to do that?**

Well what it does, well a lot of people that come in here don't know what the standard is or how to go about practising. Like for me, I've never had like a whip behind me to keep me going.(M1-8:13)

It is apparently, not that the students don't know what the standard is, it is that the standard itself is viewed by the students in some ways entirely as a myth. While students do not dispute that there is some sort of minimal standard, by that is meant, that a student must be competent to compete within the community to a standard that at some time results in the application<sup>17</sup> of the label "musician", the idea of a fixed schedule of performing ability against which students can measure their performance is not generally agreed to, by students nor faculty. This appears to be in large measure a result of the Western music notion that performers are seldom able to achieve a performance that equals the merits of the music work. Kingsbury (1984:205) writes, "Thus, in the often heard words of Marcus Goldmann, music is better than the best possible performance of it". Since the student is always, by this definition, theoretically able to improve the level of performance, a present performance need not be considered as "good enough" no matter how good it may be. Thus the standard is a constant challenge for the student and they report their impressions regularly as fears of not achieving these standards. For example,

**So you go into a room with 2500 people and say sit and listen because I'm going to sing this song. That's alright.**

Yea that's fine. But then I'm in a confident situation. It's just the beginning of coming to university, I was really insecure anyway and just....

**What are you insecure about?**

Myself I guess. Worried that I won't be up to standards, what they are looking for, putting my foot in my mouth.(M1-6:12)

Other students are confused because they do not see themselves as particularly proficient, yet at the same time acceptable to the university. Concurrently, they see *others among them* whom they consider to be even less acceptable than themselves. This perception of the "standard" is often confusing for students. This student explains,

**OK, but obviously they let you in.**

I thought well, I can tell you, I thought it was kind of weird because I didn't think I was that good, you know, I still don't but I see the people that get in and a lot I don't think should get in because I don't, .. they're not really that good. For some reason I expect a higher quality of people coming in. (A12:7)

Students come to view standards as a form of negotiation. They see the variation in performing quality and technical proficiency as extremely large. At the U of A, the official programme designated majors, i.e. education or performance resulted in a separate series of applied courses, one series for each stream. This provided an escape for the definitionally superior designated performer, the "performance major". Thus education students, who were required to register for the other applied series, were

not expected, by definition, to achieve the same "standard". But these courses are offered to individual students in private lesson format where each individual would be expected to progress at his own rate. Therefore students would need to negotiate with their teachers what constituted an appropriate gain in skill to get the academic credit for these courses. Thus once admitted, the only standard to which the student really needs to look is the negotiated one for progress established by his applied teacher. The teacher must, according to student views, be seen to uphold some sort of institutional standard but in every case, the individual instructor appears to provide most of the final input as to the grade for the course and subsequently for the success or failure response to the negotiation for credit. Students do their practice, which they define as "work", for the teacher, in order to fulfil their obligation to the negotiated "standard". This report from Edmonton for example shows this clearly.

**How much did you practice?**

Well I remember when I was younger, you know, you don't practice very much but coming to university you have to no matter what. They say you should practice at least four hours a day, you know, concert time you should play about eight hours a day, stuff like that which is kind of ....

**That's nice talk.**

That's nice talk but ...

**How much did you practice?**

I would say about two hours a day and then before my lesson, day before probably, five.(E1:16/7)

Every student who was interviewed who offered a response on this topic explained that the recommended requirement for the number of hours of practice was seldom

met and applied teachers always expected much more practice time than was temporally possible. In fact, students report that applied teachers commonly used this "impossible requirement" as a power weapon in the negotiations. Here is one such example.

I was intimidated in the fall. Very intimidated. (how) Uhm... just because I knew I wasn't playing up to his standards and he could be very....critical and he could make you feel....like he'd probably go so far as to kick you out of the lesson. And I mean I'd feel very badly at being kicked out of the lesson after practising that hard.(A9:18)

The students report that members of faculty continually talk of raising the standards, but the students are not fooled by this rhetoric although at the same time they are required to participate in the apparent sham. This graduate from UWO explains.

I couldn't believe that, they're so full of it over there, they don't tell anybody anything, they're saying that they want the jury standards, they're raising the jury standards to international standards so they're marking everybody really low. Well, I mean whose to say whose worth a 95 and whose worth a 68.(A7:26)

Because the music school community is "closed", the university can define its standard how it likes<sup>18</sup>. No music education student interviewed could shed light what the "international" standards referred to above might mean. There is virtually no required external validation of the music school's standard at all. In fact, because of



the very wide variance of performing ability found among the student population, it appears almost impossible to conclude from an academic transcript what an outsider might expect in the way of performing prowess from graduates, all of whom hold the senior credit for applied performance. At the point of entrance, the audition, it seems, serves both the students and the institution by fronting a "standard" which students subsequently use to gain points by institution affiliation<sup>19</sup>.

### The Audition

One of the most obvious situations where students become aware of "standards" and the notion of referent Other is formalized is the entrance "audition". While music students must typically meet the minimum academic requirements as set out for the university in general, their acceptance into the music school is determined by a "competitive" audition. At this audition the students are in almost every case admitted to the music school "without academic major". That is to say that a student need not make up his mind as to whether he will major in performance, music education, musicology or theory at the point of entry. In Edmonton, at the U of A, students apply to the Faculty of Education directly for a major in music education but access to the music department's applied instrument courses are available only after a successful audition.

While it can be considered that the university appears to use this process of auditioning potential students to screen out candidates that might be seen to have no real chance of success in their school<sup>20</sup>, and by that one can read that the implication or assumption might be that there is some technical standard required in performance

below which students simply could not compete in the community, the audition appears to have several other more significant sociologically important purposes. Since the audition is usually the first "official" contact with the music school, the students come to learn many important and different messages about the way the community they hope to enter operates. Students report that access is limited, for instance, to students who are prepared to acknowledge the preeminence of "classical" music<sup>21</sup>. No student playing the latest rock hit on electric guitar would be considered for admittance regardless of how well he may be able to perform it. The students learn that academic subjects (e.g. music theory and history or even previous high school academic subjects) are not as important as performing because of the apparent preeminence of performing prowess. Students report that a typical comment at auditions by members of faculty who are evaluating them is that they meet the "university" academic standard. This is usually some minimum standard established by the university in general and may in certain cases block potentially very very good performers who have ignored schooling obligations to use the time to improve their performing skills. This, students report, presents a very clear message that "performing" is what counts. This is, of course, completely identical to the position presented earlier in this thesis. Students who consider themselves "musicians" often complained that during the audition, they felt threatened as a "musician" in a way that might deny them the right to consider themselves as such. Each of the students who come to audition brings performing skills in abundance to the audition. Many have certificates of proficiency from the Conservatories and many have high school grades to present from school music courses. Nevertheless, they must once again demonstrate their right to the status "musician". Finally, students report that they are shown the power of the faculty who often show total disinterest in them as applicants.

Thus students see themselves set up for the intimidation they report about their continuity of claim as a "musician".<sup>22</sup>

It may be possible to argue that students who were eventually able to gain admission to UWO with its "high" standard would by definition be acceptable to smaller schools with "lower" standards. However, many of the students had applied to Toronto as well and students report that that school claims to have an even "higher" standard than UWO. Students who have been rejected at MUN in Newfoundland, on the other hand, have been accepted by Toronto<sup>23</sup>. It would be difficult to make a case that MUN can be considered to have even higher student performing standards than Toronto or UWO. Students see that their acceptance has to do with many factors at any given time and that they see the issue of standards as much more complex than might be assumed, particularly to an otherwise academic institution where those applying with 90% would be acceptable before those applying with 70%. The presumed status of institutions<sup>24</sup> is often captured for public display in the published entrance material. Smaller and newer music schools often publish entrance criteria which appear to students as "lower" than the larger and more established schools and the students often comment on their impressions of these "standards" and compare them with the published "standards" at other institutions. This usually relates to the level of Conservatory exams expected of students who are applying. Since the external validations of ability by high schools or Conservatories are dismissed out of hand anyway, the publication of such criteria appears to serve more the "projection" of an institutions' assumed status more than any real requirement for students. In any case, it would be a critical error to presume that the music schools which have the "highest" published entrance "standards" have been able to attract the best students. Many students attend the closest university because

they are unable or unwilling to pay the enormous costs of living elsewhere. Other students are purchased through scholarship offerings and attend where they can raise the most money. Some students even report a form of "auctioning" themselves to the highest bidder. Others attend to study with a particular teacher who is either known to them directly or has been recommended to them by someone whose opinion they value. However, where all other things are equal, students are often persuaded by the "standards" rhetoric. This first-year student at UWO explains.

I checked out Windsor and I'm sure it's satisfactory and everything but Western just seemed a better facility.

**So you came in and saw a big building and said this would be a good spot?**

Well I think it has a little bit of impact on it. It seemed like Windsor, like what you have to have to get in, it didn't seem like the standards were as high. It just seemed like Western was better.(M1-5:4/5)

On the other hand, Toronto is seen by students to be even more strict and with a higher standard. This young fellow who selected UWO recalls his audition at Toronto.

**That's better then?**

Well it seems to me as though they care a little more about who they pick than three people sitting there and I believe it was all three had to approve before you got in there. So anyway, at U of T it was kind of interesting. We got in and played and then sat and talked to you, they'd listen they didn't do any ear-training stuff. They wanted to know what your knowledge was, they wanted to know if you could put the different periods of history of music into each different perspective, you know stuff like that and if you knew who composed when, just the basic scratch you know. They were

also far more strict on their entry requirements as far as theory went. They wanted a test, they want you to be able to pass theory and harmony part, so Western didn't have that -???- to put you in. You know, they had a little test and they allotted you from class to class which seemed to me to indicate that U of T maybe picked their students a little more carefully and wanted, demanded a higher standard now, if that's a benefit or not I don't know.(M3-6:3)

He went on to say that his friends that did go to Toronto still maintain that Toronto is much better.

Students and institutions often use the grading system of the Conservatory to indicate the standard that they have achieved or in the case of the institution, the level that is expected. If the university prints that the equivalent of Grade 8 is required and a student has Grade 10, the student can shop around for another institution which says it wants a higher standard. This first-year explains.

it's [UWO] a good school.

**How do you know that?**

You just know it because there's only two schools who wanted grade 10. It's just the requirements, I guess, it's not necessarily a better school but they have a higher demanding. ..Because if you go into say (a) college, they wanted grade 8, anybody can do that...you know, grade 8 is nothing....well it is something, I admit that but when you go in with grade 10 pieces it makes you feel good.(M1-3:6)

Another student, however, challenges the need for this audition. If, as he points out, the university prints that grade whatever is necessary for entrance, that having completed this requirement, that the university could accept him on the basis of his

academic records. This might be possible except for the other apparent purposes of the audition which may be lost and they appear to be, in the opinion of the students interviewed, more important than just student selection. This student explains.

It wasn't what I expected. I expected lots of scales and triads and arpeggios. I expected that because that's what one conservatories exams and I expected this would be somewhat similar to a conservatory exam. Not quite but although.....I expected they wanted to see how good I was and where I was at but the thing is they could find that out simply by .....part of the reason was that my piano teacher told me that they'll expect scales and stuff like that and so I practised that. They could know stuff like that by reading my records and by listening to me play a couple of pieces and by talking to me I suppose. They didn't ask for any scales, just for 2 pieces and a little bit of sight-reading.(M1-2:8)

The point is, however, that the music school would seem to lose one of its most important social filters if more typical academic criteria (secondary school marks or conservatory performance examination marks) replaced the entrance audition. But students see these external qualifications as very important despite their apparent dismissal by the institution. In fact, students appear to use the Conservatory levels for the negotiation process frequently by using the grade level to demonstrate the level of difficulty that they are presently performing, thus hoping to ensure their claim as a "musician" again. This student claims that her entrance was possible only because in the year she applied, there were not other candidates who had these external exam certificates.

... well this year they have a real high calibre of singer like with credentials behind them, last year was the year I could have got in and I got in.(M2-3:6)

But she was admitted on the basis of her audition and while each year there may be variations in the level of performance which will be successful in gaining admittance because of administrative things such as how many voice students left the year before therefore leaving an equal number of places to fill, the idea that these "credentials" play any part in the decision cannot be substantiated by any observable facts. Actually students who finish the programme often query the reasons that they were accepted in the first instance.

Well it made a certain amount of sense you can't have people who don't know to play come in. So you know I had no problem about doing it. I was nervous like everybody else was. I thought it went pretty good. But when I look now I sometimes wonder exactly why I was accepted I was not very good at the time.(P10:2)

The startling truth is that many of the students who are accepted do not consider themselves to be good enough to have been accepted. Students typically apply to the university with acceptable grades and usually much experience in music. But students report that this entrance hurdle often intimidates even the best candidates. Even students who at the time of the interviews were senior students or graduates and were excelling in the music school admitted to feelings of insufficient worth to be admitted. If, as has been demonstrated before, self-worth<sup>25</sup> is attached to performance ability and this performing ability is challenged severely in the audition by asking students to compete without any knowledge of a standard to assess themselves against, then it is perhaps little wonder that they feel less than worthy to enter the university community of musicians. This graduate recalls her entrance impressions and comments on how they have changed.

**So what's the big deal about this music?**

I think it was the audition that scared me, the mere fact that so few people got in or ? to say arts or even science.

**Do you believe that's true now having finished?**

Not really, yes it is a small number, but having finished I feel like I came out of there, or that I was a good student if not one of the better ones so I felt like my reasons for being so weird about getting into it weren't justified.(V7:4)

Because there is no standard that students are able to perceive directly, they are led to believe that there may be a hidden agenda for acceptance. This may also result from the students' impression that the institution does have a very flexible standard which it imposes on the applicants in order to fill the institution's needs for various voice types and instruments. This notion of a hidden agenda is something that the students do begin to acknowledge.

**What are the other criteria?**

Well marks, high school marks that's probably a university standard so, uhm I don't really, I mean I think there are other criteria that are unknown, that are not written down and I have a fair idea of what they are but I couldn't exactly put them into words probably at the discretion of a lot of people like you meet when you come here to audition.(M4-3:18)

Acceptance by instrumental favour (a form of sponsorship) is a typical area where the institution appears to students to have a flexible standard. This first year student at UWO explains initially that his acceptance was "luck".



I was the first bassoonist at our school ever and I just like the instrument and I love music so my music teacher said <why don't you go and audition?> So I went and auditioned and I guess I lucked out. And here I am.(M1-8:1)

But further probing later in the interview revealed his already astute knowledge of the game he was playing. His point is clear, as a bassoonist, he was more or less eligible by definition, i.e. by sponsorship. He comments,

The one things that really really blew my mind was he gave us statistics and said that for every three that were accepted, two were turned away. I thought that was good. But being a bassoon player I could probably get in anywhere.(M1-8:10)

Another student, this one a cellist, recalls the auditioning process and explains that, like the bassoonist, cellos are an institutional requirement thus enhancing the opportunities for admission.

**Tell me about your audition.**

Oh I was really scared.

**Why?**

Well because you're playing in front of people you don't know when you walk into the faculty and I didn't know where stuff was. But anyway, I went up and played my pieces. I thought I did reasonably well, nothing too impressive. Then I found out later I got in.

**Were you surprised?**

Well actually no. I figured that there weren't as many cellos around as flutes and pianos so when they see a cello player come in, they're going to have a chance. Like I thought I had a pretty good chance.(M2-5:8)

Memorial University prints in its application manual that the audition is not a test of performing prowess but a search for talent and commitment. But students who are refused one year and come back to audition again seldom consider themselves more able to demonstrate a gain in potential. This MUN student recounts her entrance to the music school.

Well, I think it should be a healthy combination of both but I guess if I had to put more emphasizes on one or the other it would almost have to be the performing because it is a performing art isn't it.

**After you were selected, were you surprised?**

I was denied the first time I auditioned, and I wasn't surprised because I was only gone back to lessons for a month so it was a bit ridiculous anyway.

**But your academic abilities would have been the same?**

Yes.

...

**But still your musical performance potential wouldn't have changed would it?**

No, the level where I was, increased.(P9:3)

Students realise that their potential is seldom an issue. In fact, as will be demonstrated, the whole issue of potential can be equated to "talent", which is more or less dismissed by the music students for themselves anyway. This student explains that the possible acceptance was threatened because of a performance error. There is no talk of "potential".

...When I got my Windsor {acceptance} there was a little hard card in it that said <I accept or I do not accept> and Western's didn't have anything in it so I thought it was a refusal letter. And besides I fell apart in my Beethoven and so I thought.

**So you weren't impressed with your audition?**

Well except for the Beethoven it went pretty well.(M1-5:5)

Considering the scope of the audition with several pieces to prepare and perform, sight-reading and ear-testing as well as theory tests and questioning about musical knowledge, it seems strange that a student might perceive such an event as threatened by "falling apart" in a single piece. But with so many different types of musical skills being examined during this short auditioning process, the university apparently is able to intimidate even the most able individual. This process of intimidation appears to be and is often reported by students to be a daily lifestyle once inside, so there is little wonder that the entrance experience is different. This third-year student at UWO explains.

Auditions, let me see if I can remember. That's right we came out May the 9th I think it was, it must have been '85. A friend of mine we were both in the same school, we both came here, he's in education as well. We came in and we were ushered to a little room, actually room 125, ? doing and we given a

practice room and an accompanist and we got through the stuff just about half hour before and went into the audition.

**What did you think about that?**

You are intimidated. You can't go anywhere with being intimidated here but I thought the people were really really nice, you know, they didn't try and run us down or anything or made us feel really small. Then when I did get in to play the audition I had been told pretty well what to expect, you know, that I wouldn't be getting through all my pieces and I would have to do some ear-training work and stuff like that and I went in with not a great deal of confidence but then again I didn't really know, a part from what was going to happen, what to expect, what did they want of me stuff like that. I didn't really have a concept of the things I'm taking now. I guess I would have been a little in the dark but you know who wouldn't be, I guess. I think they did a good job, I like the way they did the audition.(M3-6:1/2)

This audition occurred on May 9th, but two years previous to the interview. It seems obvious that there is no question that this event is anything but of the most importance to these students. In retrospect, despite the intimidation which in the meanwhile this student has grown accustomed to, the evaluation was seen as positive. While the audition may be of considerable significance to the applicant, the faculty is reported as often displaying disinterest or almost contempt. This apparent demonstration of power over the lives of the students is of considerable concern to the students who mentioned it in the interview and appears to function as further proof that the assignment of the label "musician" is controlled substantially by definition. Since the standard for the audition is perceived by students as nebulous, the application of the label as adequate "musician" rests with the auditioning committee. By demonstrating this superior decorum, the members of the auditioning panel can reserve the exclusive right to the label for themselves thus beginning the process of

socialization into the community which provides definitional status rights to the "musician" label. This kind of faculty behaviour is shown in this excerpt.

...the audition was very negative.

**What's that mean?**

They were way up on a panel starring down at you, they didn't laugh, they weren't friendly, they didn't try to converse with you, they were up there like Gods looking down at you and no reaction to your singing, just a very straight Thank-you and can you come up here now.(M1-6:2)

The most discourteous representations of the audition process were levelled at the University of Toronto. This music school is generally well known by students as the claimant as the top music school in Canada. This student at UWO describes her Toronto audition.

I came on clarinet, I applied at Western, Toronto, and McMaster and of course you have to do your rounds of auditioning and things like that to come.

**Tell me about those?**

I went to Toronto first and a friend from high school, she accompanied me and we came down to Toronto and I went to the University of Toronto and no one was in the least helpful. I had to look around for ten minutes to find the office, the main office. The person there told me oh yea your practice room is just down there somewhere, go practice until the guy comes for your audition. So I had about half an hour to sort of warm-up and relax, and I went to the room where I was suppose to have my audition and there was no one there and about five minutes later three men strolled in with lunch from McDonald's which they had gotten across the street and he said oh just go ahead and play we're just going to eat our lunch. That did not put me in the greatest of moods but I thought well fine, you eat your

lunch and I'll play. And I played and I played all right, it wasn't great, it was all right. He asked me some questions and I just got the impression that he didn't really care if I went there or not. He was very impersonal, now mind you he didn't know me from a hole in the ground but I thought he could have at least made an attempt to make me feel a little more comfortable, and he didn't. And when I left I said to my friend from school, I said I don't want to go here, if that's the way they treat you when you first come then I don't suppose it gets any better once you're here. So I don't want to go there.

**Have you heard from anybody that's there now whether it got any better?**

I don't really know anybody there .....like everybody that I know that went into music didn't go there for the same reason.(M4-4:12/3)

Thus it is clear that this behaviour has consequences for the institution as well. It is, in light of this, certain that the claim, that each school attracts any particular group of students, is unlikely to be substantiated. In fact, it might be of some interest to set up specific auditioning panels and gather data on the success rates and acceptance rates of applicants who appear before them.

This apparent disinterest by members of faculty is, however, not limited to Toronto. This report at MUN is also typical.

At the actual audition, Mr. \*\*\*\*\* and \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* , neither one of them said really very much. Dr.\*\*\*\*\* unnerved me a little but then you know pacing around the piano smoking a cigarette while I am trying to play an audition.(P9:9)

Students see one further function for the audition in addition to the hidden array of purposes outlined above. Students report that they are also frequently introduced

to the biases of the institution about the relative status of the various academic majors in the music school. Typical comments to students who are auditioning include such things as "good enough for music education", "a clear candidate for our performance programme" and such as the one demonstrated below.

Then I went to Toronto, that was hell. There were three people there and they're asking me, I could see their questions were valid but they didn't put them very well and they asked me questions about like what's an opera? And like quite they were quite snarky to me, what's an opera, and I said well a music drama..... and they say what's that mean, and then they ask me, and I said well it's got like recitatives and arias....

**Sounds a lot like this interview, right.**

But they were really snarky and.

**So you didn't like them?**

Oh no, then they asked me to sight-sing which was not good because I can't sight-sing too well right. And he said I should go into composing because my sight-singing was so bad. He was really really snotty about it like it could have been funny, he could have said it nicely, kind of joke dincko (sic)

**A real what?**

Dincko (M3-3:15/6)

The audition is linked to the ability of students to make a claim as a "musician" because it is often the first formal contact that a student has with the music school. Having made a personal decision that he has a stake in the claim as a musician, based in part from some or all of the types of associations described earlier such as festivals, music camps, and various successful performance for parents and friends or in the school setting or private teacher recitals, the potential university music

school applicant must now test the validity of his claim as a musician with the music school. Thus the audition personnel become referent others because they are in a position to offer a societal reaction to the claim as a musician. It is this apparent lack of reaction that seems to distress the student reporting about her experience at MUN. That Dr. \*\*\*\*\* seemed disinterested and was pacing around the piano in no way limits his ability to listen to and make summative judgements about the performance that the applicant offered. It was the apparent lack of "societal reaction" that seemed to distress the student. It is important to see that this societal reaction is expected concurrent with musical performance as a form of validating the claim as a musician on the performer.<sup>26</sup>



## Notes for Chapter Five

1. Kingsbury (1984:11) writes, "admission to a music school is generally awarded in terms of a high level skill in a very narrowly conceived area".

2. A graduate of MUN who is a very competent french horn player lost his position as a school music teacher because he was unable to satisfy the principal's expectation of him as a "pianist".

3. see Goffman (1959) Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.

4. The idea that the music school prepares "solo" musicians which enter the performing world beyond the university with a false "identity" is worked out in some detail in Frederickson, J. & Ronney, J. (1988) "The Free-lance Musician as a type of Non-person: An extension of the concept of Non-personhood", The Sociological Quarterly. 29/2, June, p.221-139 which compares to Goffman's construct of non-personhood.

5. This "I don't know" response is yet further indication of proof of the lack of social significance of the musicology or theory majors in the music school. Even this fourth year student appears unsure of their performing requirements.

6. A succinct set of criteria for the teaching "profession" can be found in Impey, R. (1982:483) "The Context of Science Teaching: Some case studies" unpublished PhD thesis, University of Stirling. Impey writes, "For my description I have utilized as an outline some of the characteristics that various writers use to define "professionals" but I am not taking these characteristics as ideal, just as a convenient framework. I have chosen the following five characteristics: (1) the knowledge base: a profession is founded on an area of knowledge in which members of the profession tend to specialize and which is usually exclusive to them. (2) the service orientation... (3) autonomy (4) past and future consciousness: professionals usually try to improve their service by reflecting systematically on past actions and by looking ahead... (5) group solidarity. This is not an exhaustive list but I felt that other characteristics were less of a problem; for example, one of the characteristics I have left out refers to the control of entry qualifications and mode of entry to professions; in the case of science teachers this is covered by GTC regulations.

7. Musicians usually try to stake a claim on professional status by referring to the notion of the service ideal combined with practical knowledge based on a strong theoretical tradition of knowledge. There are many "secrets" of the profession like the restrictive practice of medicine even though the musician has no way of controlling access to his "profession". For "classical" musicians, the notion that the various

genres of music are seen in society as "stratified" areas of knowledge (see MFD Young, 1971) their claim is often based on the idea that as "professional" they possess this "highest level" knowledge about classical music. This is a typical university musician claim. As the stratification on musical knowledge continues to be attacked (e.g. Small, 1987) this claim becomes less and less workable, though claimed nevertheless.

8. There is perhaps a good case to be made here that music education students are in this instance demonstrating the efficacy of Becker's (1960:32-40) theory of "side-bets" in their commitment to the model of acceptable musician model. He writes that "the person becomes aware that he is committed only at some point of change and seems to have made the commitment without realizing it". Since the operationally "valuable" musician in the music school is seen as this "performer" and while all of the time on these other forms of "musicianship" must be expended, the students try to fit them somehow into a rationale for what kind of musician "counts". In this respect for example, it was seldom that I found a student who would say that improvising was very important unless that student did it well. Keyboard skills were not seen as so very vital by those without them. This seems to be another form of self-definition where the "identity" claimant bases the conferring of his own label on a set of criteria which he happens to nicely match, a sort of self-identity tautology.

9. see Walker, R. (1985:12) who writes, "apart from any lingering 19th century notions of Western cultural superiority there seems little to suggest that mere skill acquisition through rigorous training can contribute much to the development of our understanding of musical imagination" in "In search of a child's musical imagination", Canadian Music Educator. 26/49.

10. see Small (1987) concerning the nature of the university as a "gatekeeper" for higher forms of art. He writes (p.181) with respect to this higher culture that "not only is what the musician does controlled by the granting or withholding of subsidy, but even more crucial, entry itself into the profession of musician is controlled by examination and certification, through colleges of music and university music departments, in such a way as to ensure that only those who submit to the values of the culture are admitted; the degree of control that is being exerted is thus hardly noticed by the musicians, who believe themselves not only to be doing what they want to do but indeed to be engaging in the only kind of musicking that is worth their time and effort.

Of course, many of the music education students in this study are, in fact, very aware of Small's notion of "exerted force" and do not acknowledge the preeminence of the "official" or sanctioned music and find their time very profitably spent on other forms of musics, but not within the music school!

11. This interview is at the Faculty of Education and "over there" refers to the Faculty of Music.

12. most commonly referred to as "keyboards" and the playing of such as "keyboarding".

13. see Small (1987)

14. see Becker (1960) "Notes on the Concept of Commitment".

15. see Walker, R. (1985) "In search of a Child's Musical Imagination", Canadian Music Educator. 26/4, June. The author makes a case for the lack of necessity for the executionist model in music education for children in schools.

16. I was a student at the time at UWO and it was not uncommon to have professors tell us the current stages in the negotiation process to have this formal requirement changed.

17. This is in keeping with the idea developing here that societal reaction is important for the development of a musician identity.

18. Particularly in light of the apparent lack of higher status of a degree holder when auditioning for a post as an orchestral player or otherwise in the "professional" sense of looking for a job.

19. It is important to note that students "use" the audition as a substantiation of their own musical "talent", which is seen as "established" by the acceptance through means of this audition process.

20. This is fairly common rhetoric among members of faculty and is offered as a comment from the "omniscient observer's perspective".

21. A good example of the "side-bet" in Becker's (1960) theory of commitment.

22. One interesting side issue with respect to the audition has to do with the selection of music school and the suggestion that each school attracts the "best" students. There are many reasons why students select one music school in preference to another. Casey (1986) prepared a demography for Northwestern University in the United States to try to answer some of these questions relating to choice of institution. In parts of Canada, for many students there are not many choices. Pressures both family and financial force students to abandon studies out-of-province where the "local" university provides the "same" program. This can be best demonstrated by pointing out that each institution draws its students principally from a single geographic region. Even the large established schools like UWO, which can boast students from many Canadian regions as well as students from outside the country, the vast majority of students attending UWO come from Ontario. In fact, only one student interviewed for this research at UWO was an "out-of-province" student and she came from New Brunswick. Also, the greater majority of students came from the mid-southwestern region of Ontario, that is, the communities surrounding London. It is true that the bigger music schools draw more students from beyond their geographical areas than

the smaller ones. Nevertheless, in Ontario where competition for students would appear to be greatest and where most all the students interviewed auditioned at the three allowable institutions, the fact is, that most all the students were accepted at least one of the other institutions they applied to and many were acceptable to all three.

23. Another omniscient observer comment!

24. see Martin Trow (1984) "The Analysis of Status" in Burton Clark (1984).

25. Meriel Downey (1977:58) Interpersonal Judgements. Harper & Row differentiates "self-concept" from "self-esteem". She writes "The notions of self-concept and self-esteem, although not synonymous, are conceptually related. Self-concept refers to the view of a person comes to hold of himself, through the eyes of others. Self-esteem refers to the valency of the view he holds. Thus high self-esteem refers to a positive or favourable self-concept and a low self-esteem refers to a negative or unfavourable self-concept". Lacey's (1970) delinquent adolescents who sought esteem and recognition in anti-school careers afford an example of pupils who have developed a poor self-image through failure in school. "Counsellors attempt to help pupils who hold themselves in very low esteem by changing their self-concept so that they come to perceive themselves as having value and worth in the eyes of others" (Downey, 1977:59). Music education students seem to equate others' perceptions of poor performance with their own self-concept and they refer to this rather complex construct as "self-worth", i.e. a self-concept which challenges a perception by others of personal value and worth. This is a common theme among music education students and the construct of "self-worth" seems best unpacked in this explanation.

26. Some of what passes for comment on "standards" by the institution is often viewed by students as having more to do with the development of status for the institution. While on the surface it might be assumed from the official rhetoric that the interests of the students were being served as the priority in this "standards" issue, it is typically seen by students as an attempt to realign the status of the institution. This UWO graduate explains.

...then they're trying to upgrade their standards in performance because they want to build their orchestra to build their performance school. (A6:26/7)

Some older students claim to have seen through the actions of this apparent manoeuvre by the institution. At MUN, for instance, this student was commenting on what appeared to be the lack of interest in the performance programme at that institution. But after talking her way through the problem she finally concluded in

response to the question as to whether the music school was really interested in performance as follows.

You see that .....that's a funny question....because in one respect they are...in that it's a means to an end for them. They can gain a lot of things by exploiting these people and using them for their own good but I've also watched people try to get on that performance programme (P3:19)

Another MUN student explained his interpretation as follows.

The whole milieu of things over here is first and foremost to serve the public needs of this school, and I think that is the biggest flaw in the program. What I essentially mean by that is as long as the St. John's public or the Newfoundland public and to whatever watered down degree, people elsewhere in Canada, perceive that the music students here are able to perform at a reasonably competent level, then they figure the job is being done.(P8:30)

It is often argued by the faculty of the music schools that the stronger the public perception of the institution is, (and that usually appears to mean the perception of the performances of the institution) the better the students will be who are attracted to the institution and subsequently the reputation of the institution can be used for the employment opportunities for the graduates. However, it could be demonstrated that the professional music profession is particularly uninterested in the graduate status of any applicant for a performing position and the teaching profession is more tied to the degree completion in the education faculty than that of the music school. Thus it remains to be decided whether this altruism is true or false. But in any case, it clearly demonstrates that the presentation of Goffman's public front of performing excellence serves the institution's need with respect to the maintenance of the superior status of "musician" over all other possibilities such as "teacher" or "scholar". Thus the preeminence of performance as the central criterion for the application of the label "musician" within this community is secure and well known.

## Social Construction of Talent

Music education students, in their attempt to make sense of the social world of the music school, appear to challenge the idea that the performance major is a "better" performer because of some notion of "talent". This chapter examines the notion of talent and its relationship to the social construction of identity.

The New American Webster Dictionary (1972) defines "talent" as, (1) an inborn ability or aptitude (2) persons of ability (3) performers. These boundaries for the definition of the notion of "talent" are in widespread common usage. We are reminded of Becker's (1963:85) comment, "the musician is conceived of as an artist who possesses a mysterious artistic gift setting himself apart from all other people...The gift is something which cannot be acquired through education; the outsider, therefore, can never become a member of the group". While there may be some implied popular consensus as to what "talent" may mean, the model that music students develop to explain the notion in their own context, is of considerable interest to this analysis largely because it appears different than the popular version and appears to play a significant part in their construction of a musician identity for themselves.

There are some introductory comments worth making here. First, the idea that "talent" is not acquired through education is an interesting hypothesis in the context of a school whose apparent mission is to teach students about music and which makes serious demands of them, as performing "musicians". Since not all students appear to be able to perform equally well, a perception by students borne out in the interviews, then what might account for the apparent improvement made in performing skill by students? More importantly however, is the meaning that the music education students assign to the social construct of "talent" to help them in developing strategies to negotiate their way in the community. Kingsbury (1984:58) writes that talent is understood generally as a form of potential and is conceptually contrasted with learned "skill". Thus he concludes that "talent" is "a symbol of an inequality of potential". It is used as a form of popular differentiation and tends to support the hypothesis that Becker makes about the have or have not status of talent. Kingsbury (1984:59) claims that "an appraisal of talent is an ex post facto judgement". In other words, talent can only be assessed as a result of a performance and not, as Kingsbury (1984:92) indicates later, as a result of divination<sup>1</sup>. This occasionally leads students, as will be shown, into the dilemma where knowledge about a supposed or assumed talent is incongruent with observed knowledge about a performance. This incongruity, perhaps explained best in part by Heider's (1958) "balance theory" leads students to seek other meanings and explanations for the disparity between opposing beliefs. Kadushin (1969:390) writes,

Contrary to popular mythology, professional artists are made, not born. Though artistic techniques, especially in music, are often learned early, indoctrination into the culture of artists may come quite late.

This position appears to be in direct conflict with the notion that Becker has postulated. Here we have the hypothesis that musicians are made, that being presumedly a form of education. There is no mention of any qualifying attribute such as "talent", yet musicians apparently, if Becker can be believed, view themselves as special, apart from other mortals, based in large measure upon the notion of this very "talent". Within the music school, talent comes to mean specific things to students. It appears to resemble the central concept as described by Sennett and Cobb (1973:77) who, in their Hidden Injuries of Class claim that talent and other such "badges of ability" are presented as a primary means of legitimizing authority in a class society.

Since it has been shown that the internal boundaries of the music school erected around the sub-groups "music education" and "performance" could easily be considered a "class society", those students in the stigmatized class of "music education" appear to develop a view of "talent" as an educational "given". This probably is tied to the idea that academic success is seen only as possible when the student has the necessary amount (if considered quantitatively) of musical talent. Covington (1984:81) writes,

Because ability is perceived to be a central ingredient to academic success, it is understandable that efforts to protect a sense of ability is a major preoccupation among students.

Artistic ability is generally understood as some form of "talent". It is common to hear people on the street offer a common-sense depiction of musicians as "talented" or being a persons of unusual talent, extraordinary talent. This construct is variously applied to all other walks of life as well. We speak of a talented defence attorney



(barrister) or of a talented surgeon and often of sports figures we hear comments like, he has a tremendous talent for football.

Academically, however, we label good students as "smart" and a student with a high IQ is seldom referred to as "talented" as a result of this intellectual gift but, instead, the student would be typed<sup>2</sup> as a "high achiever", "clever", "studious" or "brainy". Thus the "smart" kids may have many schooling advantages because they achieve more easily and satisfactorily and receive whatever rewards the school can offer. Students around them learn that hard work can in many instances narrow the gap in achievement between the lazy genius and the hard working normally intelligent student.

Music education students call "work", that which we refer to simply as music practice. They typically announce when leaving the lounge that they must go to "work", do some "work" or "slave over Chopin now". As music education students, they appear to hold the position that the amount of "work" is the predominant determinant of success and that all academic programmes within the jurisdiction of the music school, "performance" included, as possible and available to all students who are willing to work enough. "Talent" as understood by the layman as differentiating "people" from "musicians" is more or less dismissed by the students based in large part, it seems, on the notion that if the students can meet the demands of the music school where music-making is converted into academic work, they succeed! Thus, by succeeding, they confirm to themselves and to others around them that they possess this ability which is the central ingredient of academic success. Therefore music education students typically dispute the definitional superiority of the performance major's performing prowess and claim for themselves the right to believe that they,

too, have as much "talent" as the performance major. And furthermore, the reasons they offer as grounds for having chosen the music education stream rather than the "performance stream" typically stem from one or more of this list below:

- (1) nerves not adequate
- (2) don't want to practice as much as is needed
- (3) really want to teach anyway
- (4) lack of physical ability related to technique
- (5) personality not suited to performing career
- (6) interested in a wider variety of music activities

In addition, music education students seldom suggest that their "potential" as a performer has been reached with the limited opportunity provided by the undergraduate program in any case. Thus their limit has not been tested and therefore their limit has not been defined which leaves the door open to conclude that, with sufficient work, they too might achieve the performing standards they see as perhaps falsely attributed to the "performance majors".

Students who enter the music school have typically invested a significant amount of time in developing the skills on an instrument that makes them eligible to apply to the university for music studies. Nevertheless, few students appear to have any real idea about the opportunities in music that may develop in the future and just what kinds of opportunities may reside within the institution and beyond. It appears, therefore, difficult for students at the point of entry to assess just exactly what talents or potential they might have for things yet undiscovered. This graduate from UWO explains.

Yea, so I think we're constantly changing as our horizons sort of get a little bit wider we discover more talents and things like that we can do so I really don't think that people come to university saying yes I want to be this or I want to be that cause it can be changed...(A1:25)

This situation may very well result from a general lack of artistic talent testing opportunities for our youth. The high school student is seldom challenged to demonstrate artistic talents and even those who participate in music classes in school are seldom required to do anything except perform as well as they can the 2nd trumpet part of the selection the school band is preparing for the festival<sup>3</sup>. There may be various related talents within the artistic person which are never discovered simply because of lack of opportunity. It is no wonder that graduating students can claim the discovery of new talents with more exposure to facets of the arts which had been unknown to them in the past<sup>4</sup>.

Other students reported this same notion of discovery. Once found, this talent was seen to drive the person to exploit that talent or to develop it. The students in the music school often see themselves as people who have some gift or talent to explore.

**Do you think everybody around here likes music?**

I can't say....I would guess a lot of people would like music or at least like the idea of producing something or bringing out something that is part of them. OK I know musicians and I think that people that have a certain talent or gift and when they discover what they have, they like it just because they are almost surprised with what they are doing themselves. they're surprised with this talent they'd like to develop and share with other people.(M1-2:15)

Like academic abilities or talents, music talents can be of different types as well. In terms of composing, this student defends the talent and craft required for "pop" music writing. Having been told in music classes that "pop" music was trite and simple<sup>3</sup> anyway and that true talent and craftsmanship of musical composition was exercised and apparent only in the classical genre, he asserts another perspective.

Well, my hang up basically is that there are a lot of different kinds of music in the world and I don't care who you are or what you do it still takes a lot of talent and a lot of craft to write a good pop song. Because if it was that easy everybody would be doing it and they can't.(V3:13)

Kingsbury (1984:55) also makes reference to the idea that many people still believe that the non-classical genres of music require little or no musical talent. He writes, "but I take it to be the case that in some circles there is a sense that an important feature of pop and rock musics is that little talent is required or expected".

On the other hand, the claim that the university somehow has a claim on the exercise of talent in the "classical" genre is not without dispute. In fact, it has been previously stated in this analysis that the greater world of music is singularly disinterested in the graduate "status" of the university leaver. Thus performing talent is a variable which exerts its influence independent of the university music school. This UWO graduate explains.

Not even that, if you're a good performer if you're a talented musician, an educated, whether or not you got to have a degree in it or not will be evident in your performance. There are millions of people that study privately that have no specific degrees from universities that are talented, extremely talented performers, not through any help of any university music faculty.(A6:27)

There is one anomaly which is distinct. Whereas a pianist can purchase the best instrument available on which to perform and the same holds true for violinists or trumpet players, the vocalist has the instrument as a birth right. Whether this is a great instrument or a mediocre instrument, only so much can be accomplished through training and the old adage about making a purse out of a sow's ear holds true<sup>6</sup>. Thus the voice itself is often seen by students as the "talent" rather than some other musically defined "talent" that might be required of someone who was attempting to play piano. This creates situations often in the music school where singers are judged not on their performing talent but on their voice quality. Students report that this is often seen as unfair or inappropriate to other singers particularly. This student, who was a believer in the work for improvement model of evaluation comments on her frustrations.

**So it's all improvement then?**

I think that's what it should be. That's not what other people think though.

**What do other people think?**

Well I think that most people judge on talent as opposed to what you do with your God-given voice.(A3:28)

Again, this time from MUN, there is a definition of voice equalling talent. In this instance, however, the speaker points to many of the characteristics which would otherwise be applied to an instrumentalist.

...if you had a marvellous voice, as some people I know have been blessed with marvellousness but a very good voice and absolutely no musicality, no sensitivity to style or expressiveness or they are an absolute dullard when it comes to a simple rhythms and things, which makes them useless for any kind ensemble work, even with an accompanist, just a piano and voice or a piano and whatever. Then, I think that people realize that pretty soon and you just get sort of relegated to that pitied lot who has talent but no brains to do anything with it.(P8:9)

But for the instrumentalist, talent is seen by students as a function of performing ability or minimally performing potential which has yet to be realised. This Vancouver report shows exactly the potency of the applied talent as it relates to performance.

Well when you're talking about a performance chances are you're not just sitting here talking, you're doing something that you've practised a great deal, so you're using a technique, I might, you might be a cretin when it comes to holding a conversation, but my God you've practised the piano for twenty years, you've done it diligently, you have a lot of talent, you don't have to say boo, I mean you could be cross-eyed and have warts on your forehead, nobody cares because you're hands touch the keys (V14:3/4)

While many music education students see themselves as the performing equals of performance majors at the time they enter the music school, many acknowledge that as time goes on, the performance majors drift away into an apparent higher competency level because of programme demands which limit the amount of practice time on the major applied instrument for music education majors<sup>7</sup>. Thus the career

path as a student is affected but not the "potential". This Vancouver report comments on the situation where, despite this likely scenario, a music education student continues to be the performing equal of the performance major.

I suppose they're eventually sort of let into this inner circle, but I can't of anyone really, that that really happened to but, was in general music and wanted that, I think when I made the comment that there are a lot of people that are very good performers that are in general music, I was meaning more at the time of entrance maybe even if they had potential to do a lot better or that they were better at that point, that the sheer limits of your program, when you're in general music you don't, you aren't given practice time that the performance people are given, that is in the practice room schedule at the students.(V7:7/8)

As has been pointed out earlier, the status rewards available by affiliation to the "performance major" stream include physical space allocations refused to other status groups. Thus, at UBC, and the U of A, music education students report being denied the available space and thus time to maintain a superior comparable level of performance.

Covington (1984:92) writes that "some individuals are known to harbour private self-doubts yet struggle to maintain a praiseworthy public image of competency". Among the music education students, there are frequently individuals who apparently challenge themselves with questions about having sufficient talent to achieve in the music school. Many of these doubts occur at the point of entrance and are often fuelled by the apparent hidden messages from the audition procedure itself. This next excerpt is typical of this kind of self-doubt.

No I don't think even if I practised six hours a day that he would have thought that I sounded that great, I don't think. I wasn't that good of a player as far as natural ability goes, I wasn't that good. But what the hell you might as well try to get in.(V1:19)

Often students who question their level of talent are encouraged to try by people around them whom they respect. Private music teachers and school music teachers are very often the deciding vote which elevates the potential student to audition candidature. This graduate of UWO recalls how her former piano teacher encouraged her to enter music, despite her doubts.

Well I always, through high school, I always, I really enjoyed my piano lessons and the music program at the high school I was at and I always sort of wanted to get into it but I didn't think it would be a practical field and I didn't think I was talented enough to really make a go at a music career, but I changed piano teachers in grade 13 and a friend of mine really bolstered my confidence and told me to have a go at it.(A2:1)

But even for students who are admitted, as has been demonstrated before, many feel like they perhaps should not have been or when they were, that it was the result of some criteria external to the student's abilities or talents. If we recall the bassoon player who acknowledged that as a bassoonist, he would probably be able to gain admittance at any music school, we see in his discussion a perfect example of this point. He reports his impressions on this topic as follows,

you'll get accepted, you're a bassoon player. But that kind of made me feel bad because I wanted to be accepted on my own



merit but I realised.....But then I got accepted but I was in total disbelief until I got to frosh week <I can't believe this, I can't believe this>! And then at frosh week it hit me; I'm here.(M1-8:5)

Because the newly admitted students were typically the "big fish" from their hometown "little pond", one student even referred to himself as being called "Mr. Music" at home, the first few days and weeks in the music school community can be very threatening. Some students who have self-doubts take solace in the knowledge that they do have sufficient "talent" and use that to overcome their initial hesitation in the music school. This graduate recalls her experience.

I changed myself a lot as well. I stopped being so shy. Once I got enough confidence in myself to think yea I can make it in this faculty, I have as much talent as anybody else because I went in thinking that I was no good, didn't have enough talent to match up to here.(A1:10)

As the students wander the halls in the first few days and weeks they are constantly reminded by sounds emulating from the studio and practice room doors that performing ability can be compared, and is constantly being compared. Later, it will be shown that this "rehearsing" in plain earshot of others is an important strategy from some students and apparently carefully orchestrated by some to provide the greatest benefit to them with respect to gathering points in the quest to be seen as a "musician". Other students cover over the little windows of the practice room doors at UWO to protect their anonymity when practising. Students acknowledge that there are different levels of technical proficiency represented among them. Students

compared themselves constantly with what was going on around them. This UWO graduate details her impressions.

Oh sure, I was constantly comparing myself. Uhm.. to older students and seeing where I was leading to and where they were when they were where I was. If they had the same kind of qualifications and problems and things like that. I compare myself on both sides with my colleagues, people in the same year as I was, and not just mark-wise but talent-wise and personality-wise and things like that to see who, I don't know, to see if I was heading in the right direction. I just wanted to make sure I had what it took to get here.(A1:15)

This account hints yet again at the apparent continuing need to validate one's right to be part of this campus music community. Students who refer to comparisons of "talent", as this last one did, frequently make use of the construct to refer more to displayed performing ability or prowess rather than some assessment of potential. Thus talent becomes for some the here and now of ability rather than some reserve well which can be tapped and drawn and developed in the future as one's studies progress. This account from MUN details this point.

...he tends to approach every student on an equal level. I know most of the trumpet majors in here whom he teaches and there is a great disparity in talent which everyone acknowledges from \*\*\*\*\* who is an outstanding talent to \*\*\*\*\* or \*\*\*\*\* who are just average guys going through the motions and going through their chosen field of music major.(P8:17)

Thus these excerpts do not represent negative cases<sup>8</sup> but merely alternative definitions which are available to the students in the music school. They are used to saturate the category of "talent" as perceived by students with both maximum and

minimum differences (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The typical understanding of the notion of "talent" is apparently centred around potential or innate ability. This appears to be critical in the music school since if, as has been suggested by these last few excerpts, talent must be perceived as the "displayable" product at this moment, then there would be little way for the differences in performing ability, which this last student explains are apparent to everyone, to be accounted for by the less able performers at any given time with the "work" ethic model that seems to be in place in the music school.

First then it is necessary to show that "potential" is seen as "talent". Students, particularly music education students whose other academic responsibilities rob them of time which might otherwise be spent developing their performing skills, often admit that the programme does not allow them to reach their "potential" and that their available "talent" supply has not been tested to its capacity. This graduate explains.

**What do you mean by yet?**

I'm still taking piano lessons and I still know that I haven't reached my potential.

**Is that important?**

That I'm still taking lessons?

**Yea.**

To me it's very important.

**Why is it important?**

I want to know where my potential is, I want to know how well I can play.(A1:27)

Another UWO graduate explained that music represented for her the first thing she felt good about doing. In fact, this student had had a rather frightful early educational background because she had been placed in special school for slow learners. Now as a university graduate, she looks back on the school's ability to label students with such terrible consequences. Music represented the first real chance at success. She recalls.

It was the first time in my life I found out I could do something that I wasn't bad at. I was terrible at school. But I realised that I had a little bit of talent here and I wanted to see where I could go and that was really interesting to see how fast I could progress and how I could get better.(A1:28)

Furthermore, students seem unsure as to how the institution judges "talent". But students construct their own meanings for "talent". They also see that the closed community can establish its own definitions. Students have difficulty with the concept that this "natural ability" might give students an edge in terms of performing competency. Ironically, when they are questioned with the same problem but in an academic situation, they have no hesitation to say that simple intellectual gifts should be a major criteria in the awarding of grades. For instance, if a very bright student does extremely well with little effort in a science course, students credit their success to intelligence. But in the same breath, in a performing situation, they want to see "effort" or "work" become the principal criteria in marking performing<sup>9</sup>. This is based upon the apparently agreed formula that all students who have been accepted by the music school have "talent". They have enough "talent", in their view, to compete for any of the academic streams if they so determined it to be in their own interest or will. Here is a typical example which points to this perception.

Well assumedly we all got accepted into the university because we all have semblance of talent; what they consider talent however they judge that and that hopefully all the people in voice have a half decent voice and they can sing and so I think that it's not to judge whether you will be an opera singer and you won't. That is not a good judgment. I think it's, because that doesn't necessarily reflect how hard you work because, you know, one person could be born or as they get older have a fabulous voice you know they're lots of famous singers who probably never took a singing lesson in their life and then there could be another person and so that person didn't work very whereas they're could be another person who wasn't maybe as good a singer who worked five times harder and I think they should be given the credit for that. When they get out of the university that probably doesn't apply any more though if it's an educational institution then I think that's the way it goes.(A3:29)

This excerpt is interesting because it declares that (1) all music students have talent, (2) that how the faculty judge that is largely unknown thus indicating an ambivalence to the definition, (3) judging upon "natural gift", i.e. voice is not acceptable and (4) "work" should be the preeminent criterion of success within the community.

Thus students in music education generally see themselves as competent. This is to be compared to the perceived definitionally superior "performance" stream and music education students usually declare that the difference rests almost exclusively in their willingness to "do the work". This is not to be construed that they feel as though music education is in any way easier, but that it usually offers more diversity by requiring secondary instruments and conducting which are seen by the students as

more interesting than several daily hours of isolation in a practice room. This excerpt outlines the position initially.

**But I find that strange because I've always had this sort of impression, growing up, at least as sort of a member of the greater public, one has this impression that talent plays such a vital part of this business and yet no music student has ever told me in any of these interviews that the difference between performance and non-performance has anything to do with talent, it's just they, that's what they practice.**

I agree, it's not, I agree with the people that have been telling you that, I don't think it's the talent, I think it's their attitude towards, they're attitude people aside, they're attitude towards music is something that will put them in that general direction. I went into general music because I didn't think I was the type of person that would make a good performer, not because I wasn't talented, but because I didn't have the dedication to do all the work necessary.(V7:9)

Another UWO student confirms this.

**So you believe in the 90% perspiration and 10% inspiration theory.**

Yea. I suppose I could do it if I wanted to but I guess I don't want to.(M2-5:3)

This second year student even went so far as to successfully attempt the entrance audition required of music students to enter the performance stream from the general first year programme. It is curious observation that while at the first contact, the university may be able to discount external evaluations because of varying standards

or for whatever reasons they may wish to put forward, the entrance audition to the performance stream is clearly an in-house decision which might possibly just as easily be made from the information already held by the institution. Students in music education often suggest that the lack of an "special" entrance requirement for music education leaves them as the catch-all programme for any who are unable to gain entrance elsewhere. We are reminded of the disgruntled student's comment in L'Roy (1983:131) who says, "I resent the fact that those who are in music education for insurance don't have to prove that they can teach".

Having successfully proven herself at this audition, this UWO student still rejected the opportunity because of her lack of discipline to practice.

Last year I did a performance jury and I got in, so I don't really want performance because I don't have the discipline to practice four or five hours a day. It's just not in me. (M2-4:4)

Thus the music education students appear to take the position that the music school holds the students in the "performance" stream, as better "musicians" by definition than all others in the music school but that they, as music education students could be just as good if they wished to be, provided they were prepared to spend the time on their instrument. Therefore the notion of "talent" appears to lose any importance as an issue and therefore "talent" comes to be defined as "potential" or "possibility of musical success" or the like which all music students on campus have in sufficient amounts to be successful in any of the academic streams. This view tends to support the position taken by Becker (1963:85) inside the music school, that being, that as far as "talent" is concerned, music education students seem to consider that by

official acceptance into the music school, music students are identified as having sufficient "talent" to be classed as one of the special people possessing this "mysterious artistic gift" and in a totally nominative way. Many students regarded the performance stream as possible for them but they simply did not wish it or they lacked some aspect of what they considered to be necessary besides the "talent" which they all had and the "work" which they would rather not entertain. This student lacked the goal and motivation but claimed the ability.

**So you think generally anyone could do the performance stream if they practised enough.**

That's right, if they have the goal and incentive to reach it.  
(M2-3:13)

Other students do not wish to spend the time because they have other things to do.

Now I really appreciate the music, I really appreciate when somebody can play this stuff well and I attempt but the work that's involved in that I would rather spend more doing something else.(A5:11)

Other students see the risk of spending so much practice time that appears to be required of the performance major to be a threat to academic success in other areas. But the possibility or ability is nevertheless taken for granted.

**Do you assume that when you're admitted to music that that means that you've got enough talent to do whatever it is you want to do in music and now you just have to decide**



**what it is you're going to do, if you want to practice a whole lot you can be a performer?**

Yea...

**That's it and you believe that?**

Yea. If you want to, you really, really have it in your heart, not just to say yea I want to be a performance major, yea I think that's what I want to do, you know, and then say okay I'm going to do it, you know. I mean, if you're really, really determined, if you really have it in your heart to become a performance major, you can do it. I mean, to become a professional musician you're going to really strive. I mean, your other marks may suffer quite a bit because some people have to work harder at practising than others, I know that.(V1:12)

Progress, i.e. demonstrated ability is seen purely as a function of time on task.

**Are they better performers?**

I think so because they spend more time on it. Anyone can become better than someone else if they practice more.(M2-3:12)

Other students see beyond the institution to what "performance major" may mean in the outside world. Very few students in music education (which was the only group interviewed and thus the only group to which this report can speak) seem to identify with the occupational requirements of a performance career in the outside world. Therefore this student rejects the performance stream because of the life-style it represents for the future. Again, however, there is no talent delimiter.

I could consider it on voice much easier but I don't think I would go strictly performance and tour the world on voice. I don't want to dedicate my life to that I don't think. (M2-8:11)

Another indication that "talent" appears to be generally defined as some sort of latent ability rather than present performing prowess comes from suggestions that someone may be "talented" even after having stopped playing altogether or for that matter, changing careers. First from a MUN student the suggestion that "talent" may lie dormant.

So then I began to think well you know I really like music and I did it for a lot of years and then it just sat dormant. So the talent is still there why not get it started up again or see if there's anything left to work with and start to teach so that's what started it all.(P6:1/2)

This UWO student was considering switching career directions and entering law. She was discussing what constituted a "musician" and when confronted with her own situation she was emphatic that being a "musician" resided with this "talent" that she had, whether active or not.

**Well I don't know the difference; you see because you tell me on the one hand, you stop playing and you become a lawyer, you stop playing, you say, "Well I use to be one," and then I said, "Well ....**

But I know what I have, I know that I do have a talent.(2A6:33)

The belief that "musician" may be defined by some sort of latent "talent", rather than just by some active form of performing can be seen in Kadushin (1969:391) where he writes,

...the artist is constantly placed in the position of having to explain that he is "really" a musician even if at the moment he is driving a cab. Often, for all one can see, the professional self-concept<sup>10</sup> of a musician is the only thing that makes a professional musician.

The music education student appears to be in the same predicament. Forced to behave as a performing musician in the music school in order to compete within that social world for status, the belief grows that all members of the music school have sufficient talent to make only "work" the primary predictor of achievement. Without this belief, the claim on the status "musician" where the definition seems constructed more generally by the members of the music school community would mean that many students would be unable to compete for the status with any hope of success. This also may account for the need of the music school to appear to be so "closed" so that it may have the power to define what counts as a "musician".

Therefore there is every likelihood that music education students may perform as well as performance majors, even though the latter are by definition superior. Many music education students feel that there are substantial numbers of their peers who have the equal performing prowess of the majority of the performance majors. This excerpt demonstrates this again where the Bachelor of Education student at Edmonton looks to a degree in music performance as a possibility.

For me yea, a Bachelor of Music is very appealing, certainly. And I consider myself an good enough musician to be able to do it without too much difficulty, but it's not what I want to do right now.(E7:14)

Some students refer to "talent" in almost a religious way as some extraordinary essence that resides in one's soul. This first-year student at UWO explains why she likes music.

**Do you like music?**

I love it.

**Do you think most of the people around her like it?**

Oh yea, they have to ...you can't go into music without liking it. If you have a talent you must like it. It's in your soul.(M1-3:16)

The "talent" for **performing** is generally not understood as the same as a "talent" for **playing**. Thus music education students may continue to hold that they are musically talented and mean that they may be able to "play" well, while at the same time not claim to have whatever "talent" it takes to "perform" well. This distinction has surfaced before, but with respect to "talent" it usually gives the appearance of an explanation for not being able to perform well. Nevertheless, students usually can convince themselves and receive support for the belief that the two positions, i.e. playing vs. performing are separate and possibly distinct forms of "talent". Thus the following report is not uncommon.

**What's that mean, "not for you"?**

I don't know. I guess I don't have the motivation you need for a performer.

**And that's the only reason?**

That and the last two years, whenever I get up to perform I get really nervous. I never really had a problem with nerves in high school.(M2-9:3)

The other typical response, besides nerves, is that there is some "technical" limitation. Students may have hands that are too small to consider performance professionally. They may credit themselves with sufficient "talent" but realise that with tiny fingers the game is over. This excerpt demonstrates this well.

**So you think that it's nerves that kept you out of performance primarily?**

Primarily and I didn't have the technique behind it, you know.

**Piano technique?**

Yea.

**Is that something that you could have learned?**

I probably could have. My teachers never ever did when I started, I was so keen to learn music and they never pushed me so much with the technical skills and they'd been lacking all the time...(V6:14)

Another indication is that "talent" appears sometimes confused with technique or otherwise limited by it. Technique is viewed as the principal vehicle of progress in the music school. The students who can play more and more and more notes achieve

substantially more status for having done so than any student who is content to learn fewer notes and concentrate on the development of subtle musical features of the compositions set out for the students to learn. Thus students often complain about technical limitations because these rob students of opportunities to achieve a certain amount of status in the community. Here we see "talent" associated with "limits" but then learn that these "limits" are only technical problems or limitations.

**You said you knew your own talent. How do you know that?**

I know my limits. I think that in small ways by comparison and I see other musicians and I see what they are capable of doing. And I'll try it and realise, you can't do that. For instance, I'll hear a piece in a recital that I just think, that's gorgeous, I've just got to learn that. So I go get the music and I'll pick it up and go < < oh you can't even reach that far > > < < you can't play that > > .(A11:20)

Of course, the ability to play lots of notes, that is, demonstrate a purely "technical" prowess does not in itself assure a student of success as a "musician". Thus we read in Kingsbury (1984:128) that "the value of playing (or singing) musically is a genuinely sacred value in the conservatory, quite possibly the ultimate value". Just lots of notes is not enough. In fact, music students appear to aggressively denounce the "technicians" who attempt lots of notes rather than playing "musically".

The applied instructors often exert pressure on students they see as having sufficient "talent" to succeed in the performance stream in the music school. These students are typically the ones who have apparently performed well or demonstrated

that they have the technical prowess to show the teacher this "talent". This is not to be confused with some notion that the student is capable of competing in the outside world as a performer, but merely adequate to the music school demands. Because music students typically view their teachers themselves as wishing to be perceived as "performers" rather than "teachers" and the music school awards a higher status to performers than future teachers, students learn that their talent may not be exercised fully and that somehow they are letting the teacher down by rejecting the performance stream or perhaps even letting themselves down. Most music education students see the situation differently<sup>11</sup>. They see music education as a real possibility to employ music in a safe occupational setting and they often report that the performance major, while perhaps enjoying the satisfaction of testing the limits of his potential or talent within the institution, is destined to an unknown occupational future, full of insecurity and constant competition for limited opportunities. A fuller discussion of this follows in a section about the "failed musician".

When teachers try to convert music education students into "performers" they often do so by pointing to this excess of untapped talent. They tell students that they have the "talent" to succeed as a performance major. Unfortunately for many students, these same teachers make little claim on any chance for them in the future as a performer. This second-year student at UWO is a typical case.

**So you'll stay in music ed. so you don't have to practice.**

No, no. I can always play well. If I want to take the initiative, I can always practice the four or five hours, you know, my teacher wanted me to go into performance and she's very willing if I'm ready to give whatever I need to play, like a performance major...

**What did she say when you said you were going into music ed.?**

Not much. She knows I hate to practice. That's the one place I guess I'm lacking. I'm told I'm talented but when it comes to the discipline to practice...(M2-4:4/5)

This next student was told that she also had the "talent" for performance and that the result would be that she would enjoy having done so after graduation. This graduate reports her story.

No, I explained it to her that I wanted an education in music and I just didn't want to perform.

**What was her reaction?**

Well I really think you should get in performance. You can take the courses, the same courses when you're here you know and get your education in music. But, I really think you should go into performance because I think you have talent and I think you further your career this way and you will enjoy it once you're done.(A6:37/8)

Unfortunately, many of the applied instructors do not accept "no" very graciously and resent the student's rejection of their offer. Students claim that they are not seen as being serious about their applied instrument and as has been reported in the section on "stigma", some teachers begin to treat the music education students differently.

"Talent" is viewed as being "situated" by most music education students. They see the performance major as unwilling to acknowledge this. But just as they experienced when they entered the music school in the first instance, they view the future for the performance major with the same "big fish" in the "little pond" metaphor as they saw



in their own life when they arrived from high school. The collected negotiated status that a student accumulates as a student performer goes for naught when the student leaves the enclave and presents himself to the outside world. This UWO graduate explains.

**So it doesn't really depend on ability or talent then?**

A lot of it doesn't. But that's just in the music faculty. I mean in the real world, we'll see what happens, it all comes down to the final thing when you're applying to other schools or whatever. They don't care how many little small recitals and how many people you have accompanied here and they don't care what your reputation was here. They don't care about your talent when it comes down to auditions.(A6:16)

Another student from Edmonton explains that what is considered technically advanced in Edmonton was considered the norm where she had come from outside of Canada. This advanced technical ability was immediately assessed as "talent" in Edmonton but the student now recognises that it was the "situation" rather than any real standard that gained her the status as "talented". Thus, once again, we see that "talent" is equated with demonstrated ability by the institution whereas the students may perceive it more as potential.

...well I guess when I first came to Canada, I guess my technique ability when I was 10 years old was about grade nine music which was quite a bit, I guess, to a lot of people here, 10 year-olds don't usually play grade nine pieces and it was kind of a ... they thought I was really talented ... I don't know I think it was just the system I was in and everybody was at that level when I was 10 years old there but they just thought it was wonderful here but that's why I actually ended up getting really good teachers when I came to Edmonton and stuff.(E1:5)

Music education students see most everyone around them at the university as "talented". They view this "talent" as some form of musical performance potential and they believe that this "talent" is not uniformly given to the general public and therefore they do not expect to find it in their future classes all that frequently. For example this student questions the suggestion that music be taught as an aesthetic experience in schools<sup>12</sup>.

Well it was a discussion, I had questions about how can you have, how can you present music as aesthetic education to your classes when twenty percent of the people in your class are musically talented, I would say, and the eighty percent are not and you're trying to provide aesthetic experiences for all.(2A6:15)

In fact, when music education students saw teaching techniques fail when implemented by their peers, they often resorted to explanations that identified their belief as to the universality of musical talent among their own group and that the absence of this "talent" among the school children accounted for the failed lesson.

**But, isn't that kind of bizarre that he could get a degree in Music Ed. and not be able to do that?**

No, I don't think that's bizarre. Because in Music Ed. you never have to deal with people that can't do music.(2A10:28)

Thus music education students come to resent the definitional superiority of performance majors because they view themselves frequently as having the "talent"

potential to perform every bit as well. The interviews are full of examples where this position was stressed. Music education students typically claim to know specific examples where their own peers out-performed performance majors. This example offers a case in point.

**So it doesn't really have anything to do with performance ability then?**

Not at all, not at all because I know of quite a few music education people who can play circles around a lot of the performers.(2A4:8)

At Memorial University, very few students actually elect to be a performance major. But many music education students claim to be musically capable of competing successful in terms of performing ability with those who have.

I think so but like, there are people in performance and people who aren't in performance .....what am I trying to say.....right now for example, there are very few who are doing performance but, there are people doing education who I think are just as good musically now as the performance ones we have now. (P1:16)

Other students simply challenge the definition that performance majors are more talented.

**I thought you wanted to be a teacher?**

I do. But to my applied teaching that doesn't make any difference but educators can still have, I mean who says the educators can't have as much talent as performers.(A3:32)

This researcher still regularly performs publicly as a tenor soloist. Many music education students see this as proof of their own projected possibilities as a music-maker. This excerpt from a Memorial senior explains.

In some ways there is but on the other side of the coin I don't see why necessarily anyone who is doing music education could not be a serious performer. I can think of cases of individuals who are educators who are very gifted performers and perform frequently as much or more than members of the faculty here<sup>13</sup> for example.(P8:16)

Another Memorial student reveals that students do recognise that "talent" is assessed and labelled by academic major thus supporting the superior position of the performer.

**Can I imply from that that you feel as though there are performing equals amongst the music education students.**

Oh, I certainly think so. Sure.

**But they're not recognized?**

I don't think so, no.

**It's sort of a preselection once they've been labelled as you said before and then it's all finished and done with.**

I think so.(P6:23)

Actually, music education students question the validity of such labelling procedures and do not accept the notion that their degree programme is for the less "talented". In Vancouver, the future teachers would normally register in the "general" rather than the "performance" programme. But the students do not see the legitimation of the claims made concerning the superiority of the performing major.

The general degree is for people who are not presumedly of that calibre of talent or skill in their performance area...(V5:3)

Music education students often defend their decision as not having elected to do performance as a major while often acknowledging that they have the ability to do so. They rely on their perception of talent as "potential" rather than as displayable performing prowess and use "technical" limitations to their performing abilities such as small hands as "excuses" for not doing so. Other reasons given usually centre around the differences they perceive between playing and performing. Frequently they cite lack of "nerves" for performing while retaining the belief that their playing may still be at an equal level. They believe that the performance stream does not offer a reasonable career possibility and that performing opportunities in the outside-world are not limited by degree majors and thus they can compete freely outside if they so choose. They believe that to be a performance major is mostly determined by one's willingness to "work" at just this one thing while ignoring wider musical interests. Kadushin (1969:403) writes that a key factor is that a music conservatory is "both a school for students and an arena for performers". While the university music school may be a "closed" community, it is, nevertheless, a "real" world for the performance

student. There is a stage and an audience. While this may not translate easily into the "outside" world, for the time that the students are in the music school, performing is a "real" option. Music education students appear to see beyond that apparent limitation.

## Notes for Chapter Six

1.Kingsbury writes (1984:92) "The concept of "potential" is generally cumbersome and unavailing in analyses of social behaviour - and it must be emphasized that musical behaviour is social behaviour. The validity of a notion of "potential" entails an understanding of the process through which the potential will be realized or activated. The concept of potential energy, for example, is premised on the understanding that specific physical and mechanical processes can generate kinetic energy from the store of potential. Although there are, to be sure, biological and physiological mechanisms of the body which are affected by musical behaviour, attempts at analytic isolation of musical potential by psychologists and neurologists have consistently been very problematic. The idea of musical potential is wedded to an impact idea that musical experience is not so much social as intra-personal. The study of human musicality will almost certainly be riddled with difficulties as long as the unit of analysis is the individual, rather than social interaction.

2.see Hargreaves, Hester & Mellor (1975) Deviance in Classrooms for a discussion of teacher typification.

3.see Goodlad, John I. (1984:219) A Place called School

4.My own case is offered as a case in point. My undergraduate degree programme in music education at UWO had me performing as a trumpet major. It was not until I began my graduate programme in choral conducting that I switched to a "voice major" (commonly referred to as "mouth major") and then subsequently to a brief career as a professional singer in Europe. Based upon my own experience, I would have little by way of contrary evidence to suggest that the construct that music education students use in this regard is anything but accurate.

5.Another example of the stratification of music knowledge. refer back to the section on the "types of music" and more generally MFD Young (1971).

6.The extent to which training can "make" a voice is of course always open to dispute. See Husler, F & Y. Rodd-Marling (1965) Singing: the mechanism and the technique. London: Faber & Faber.

7.so much so that some performance majors at UWO who spent a rather more than considerable time in the practice rooms became known as "practice-bunnies".

8.The concept of "negative case" is taken here to mean an instance of social action that seems not to follow an implied theoretical directive, i.e. an exception. See Glaser & Strauss (1967:138 & 230) who write "consequently, there are no guidelines

specifying how and how long to search for negative cases or how to find alternative hypotheses given a specified body of qualitative data."

The authors suggest elsewhere that negative cases seldom discredit a theory, merely expand it in some way, thereby making the theory more complex and accurate.

9. refer back to Hargreaves, D. (1972:20) where his formula "ability + motivation = attainment" is discussed and also Heider (1958) "attribution theory"

10. refer back to Downey, Meriel (1977) Interpersonal Judgement on self-concept and self-esteem

11. It might be useful to remind ourselves that this position is also taken by many of the students' parents. Refer back to the section that discusses this point specifically.

12. Aesthetic education has become the goal of music education in the eyes of many, particularly since the publication in 1970 of Reimer's book, The Philosophy of Music Education. Recently, the exclusive justification for music education on Reimer's aesthetic grounds has been challenged. See for example Roberts (1989) and Elliott (1989a).

13. This "here" is in the School of Music where this interview was conducted. The education faculty members at the time of these interviews taught in the Faculty of Education and becomes concomitantly the "there" situationally.



## **Section B**

**Towards a Model of Identity**

**Construction and Maintenance**

## The Socially Constructed Self as Musician

The previous sections of this analysis have illuminated the context of interaction for music education students. Having examined the aspects of the music school that relate to groups and the "symbolic" community in general focusing upon themes as status affiliation, what counts as a musician and what counts as music, which lay bare the perceived "situational" reality as socially constructed by the music education students, the focus of the analysis now turns more specifically to the individual. The central focus of this analysis now turns towards an exploration of the dynamics of Self as a social process in the social world of the music education students. There is an attempt to construct a model of the social processes by which identity construction and maintenance proceeds as students engage in interaction in their "insider" world. It focuses particularly upon the construction of Self, Self and Others, the Self in ongoing processes of negotiation. Who am I, who supports this view, whose view do

I value, and finally, how do I negotiate my construction of reality? These are the central questions to be explored next.

There appears to be sufficient evidence about the music school to demonstrate that status is gained in large measure for "musician" roles. In fact, Kingsbury (1984:11) writes, "the important point for me, however, was the intensity of some students' concern for a sense of identity which was engendered by such matters". These roles are complex and varied and, as such, there is more to be learned by an examination of individual cases than by trying to set individuals into pre-determined categories. In fact, an acknowledgement of this basic premise seems central to the "role-making" position in symbolic interactionism theory<sup>1</sup>. This is seen as contrasting sharply from "role-taking" which is viewed as a more static notion of social construction. Turner (1962:22) writes that this "role-making" approach has "less interest in determining the exact roles in a group and the specific content of each role than in observing the basic tendency for actors to behave as if there were roles". Since it must be clear to the reader by now that this analysis adopts the music education students' standpoint in the social construction of these roles, it is perhaps redundant to point out that how "others" may construct the "musician" role is only important as contributory data to the students who are in the day-to-day position of engaging in social interaction based upon such socially defined meanings. Who these students become, or think themselves to be, evolves as their "musician" identity, an identity which previously has been suggested to be a "master status"(Hughes, 1945) identity in the music school. We learn from Woods (1979:174-6) that turning certain typifications into stereotypes are typical of institutions. The music school is such an institution and as such has developed formal official bandings such as "performance" majors and "music education" majors but also provides situational opportunities for

socially constructed typifications to develop. We have seen that one of these, the "definitionally superior performance major" is generally contested by music education majors. Woods writes somewhat later (1979:247-8) that "Pupils are engaged in a continual battle for who they are and who they are to become, while the forces of the institutionalization work to deprive them of their individuality and into a mould that accords with the teachers' ideal models". In the music school, however, it appears not only to be the teachers who wish to see the music education students relegated to their place in the social order. By contesting the social order of the "performance major" superiority, music education students show that their identity is not bound to roles which are prescribed for them. They have an apparent steadfast hold on the position that they are equals in terms of talent and thus potential as a performer which defies the more bureaucratic structure in which the "performance" majors seem able to operate because of its supportive sponsorship.

In the literature, the notion of "identity" has been described by McCall and Simmons (1978:65) as,

the character and the role that an individual devises for himself as an occupant of a particular social position. More intuitively, such a role-identity is his imaginative view of himself as he likes to think of himself being and acting as an occupant of that position.

Baksh and Martin (1986:7-8) outline three assumptions or principles of symbolic interactionism. The first is that people act towards "objects" (persons, places, situations or things) on the basis of meanings such "objects have for them. Secondly, that these meanings are assigned by the actors and are not inherent within the "object" itself<sup>2</sup>. And thirdly that these meanings held by the actors are developed in the course

of human interaction. Cultures arise when common or shared meanings develop among people. They continue to explain that symbolic interactionism theory recognises that actors develop "perspectives", "frameworks" or "interpretational codes" and from these select their own appropriate "strategies", or plans of action. It is to the heart of the symbolic interactionism theory and its ability to describe the notion of role-making as a result of these selected strategies that we now turn.

Blumer (1965) is reported as being resistant to the notion of collective determinism (Meltzer et al., 1975:64). He sees these cultural norms, status positions and role relationships as only the frameworks within which social action occurs but clearly not as determinants. This idea of role-taking as a conformist's position, in contrast to the more process orientation supported by Blumer of role-making, can be applied to music education students by viewing their perceptions of the musician-role as only a framework for self-concept (Downey, 1977:59) or as an ongoing internal conversation between competing constructions of reality.

All music students appear to have idealized notions as to the role-content of the social role of "musician". It is for them, a social career<sup>3</sup> because it apparently requires a continuous negotiation to maintain. As the career develops there seem to be certain points of crisis and other times of social acceptance by others of the claim music students wish to make about their musician-role. Thus, their actual role-performance is much more varied and inconsistent with an occupancy model (Coulson, 1972) for the assimilation of these idealized social roles. Clearly in the case of the "musician" role, the boundaries for inclusion are much wider and varied than they would be in, for instance, the case of other professions such as medicine. The practice of medicine is permitted only by institutionally qualified persons. In the case of musician, not only

does society not demand any formal qualifications, the very nature of music-making has been consistently fostered within society generally and "amateur" music making can often be of "professional" quality (and even the reverse is unfortunately known to have occurred). There appears to be no contract between society and musicians like there is claimed to be in medicine or law for example<sup>4</sup>. However, students do carry a notion of their idealized self with them. Whether there is any chance in reality to aspire to such heights remains a mystery. Consider this student's response,

**When did you decide to study music at university?**

Always, I've always wanted to do music. I've always wanted to sing. I've always wanted to be famous.(M1-4:2)

Thus when McCall and Simmons (1978:65) write that "role-identity is his imaginative view of himself as he likes to think of himself being and acting as an occupant of that position", it is clear that any requirements for this student to make this claim remain solely in her own perception of that reality. Although unlike Thurber's "Walter Mitty", if this student can conduct herself in a manner which is somehow consistent (and fulfilling of) the specific contents of her imaginative view of herself, that view becomes a legitimate one. McCall and Simmons' report (1978:69-70) suggests that many of our best role-performances take place purely in fantasy and imagination. They continue,

Yet if one does claim identities in this way, interpersonally, the legitimation of them is no longer so easy. He has not only to persuade himself that his views of himself are true enough, but he also has to act in such ways that identities he has claimed before the other people are not disconfirmed in their eyes, for otherwise he is right back where he started - with no identity but in need of one.

Thus the student above who wishes to be seen as a "star" and having made such a social claim on this status, now apparently must go in search of Other who will react to her as a "star", that is she must seek legitimation by both persuading not only herself but must, in some way or other, convince others that she is entitled to her claim as a "star". Furthermore, the support for this role must continue over time because the support for her "star" status is a fleeting phenomena and her claim to be a "star" will be challenged again and she will need to repeat the process of legitimation over again both for the needs of the others and also for herself, for it is important to fulfil one's imaginings and to live according to one's role-identities<sup>5</sup>. Individuals in a society want to be and to do as they imagine themselves being and doing in that society. If, as a "star-singer", this student can be accommodated within the music School, whatever other role-identities she might be considering such as "education" (albeit in lower priorities) might possibly remain oppressed and undeveloped and that could very well be against her own self-interest<sup>6</sup>.

It is possible that what is usually thought of as the whole personality is comprised of substantial numbers of role-identities (McCall & Simmons, 1978) which create a fluid Gestalt as their various priorities for the individual come in and out of importance. However, institutions, as well as the interactional opportunities within these institutions which can afford to offer status rewards, either extrinsic or intrinsic, can apparently have substantial influence on the priority that an individual places on the prioritizing of the person's various role-identities. This appears particularly true where, as in the case of the "musician", the self-esteem (Downey, 1977:59) of the individual is based on the perceived ability to fulfil that role and where that particular

role claim is tested on a day-to-day basis in the music school. Often the person who stakes his aspirations on this identity seeks support for this role-performance at whatever cost to other more "realistic" goals. Because the standards, or role definition, against which the students must measure themselves can be set largely by the individual music school, this same "symbolic" community (Cohen, 1985), other students and members of faculty, may provide sufficient status reward for the continuation of the possibly less appropriate role-performance and subsequent denial of the importance of other role-performances that the student might also have need to develop. In fact, for those students who seem less able to compete for the limited rewards available, the option of taking one's distance from the role becomes more likely. Goffman's notion of role-distance plays an ever increasing part in the life of the less able to compete music student. But as Goffman (1972:93) points out,

A flustered failure to maintain either kind of role poise makes the system as a whole suffer. Every participant, therefore, has the function of maintaining his own poise, and one or more participants are likely to have the specialized function of modulating activity so as to safeguard the poise of others.

Thus it is little surprise that there appears to be incredible pressure brought to bear upon students<sup>7</sup> who, once having attained some measure of identity with the "musician" role, and having received even a modicum of social reward for the claim on this identity, that escape seems unlikely. The reciprocal is also true. In this case, the individual [our music education student] tries to manage "undisclosed discrediting information about self" (Goffman, 1963:42) such as having to participate in the



acknowledgement that he does in fact have sympathies toward the stigmatised role as a potential educator.

In situations where students are seldom asked to construct other identities, eg. as a teacher, there also seems to develop little need for social support for this role-identity. McCall and Simmons (1978:81) state it thus,

Those identities most in need of support are more likely to be acted upon, for we strive always to legitimate our conceptions of ourselves.

As stated before, the ability of the music school to establish the standards by which the person can judge his claimed identity, makes it unlikely that he will not receive the necessary support by the music school in whose self-interest this legitimation rests. Students who simply withdraw from the race pay an enormous price for their autonomy.

However for the most part, students who have their musician identity threatened by lack of positive societal reaction from a perceived important audience, such as peers or tutors, experience what McCall and Simmons (1978:98) rather graphically describe as "misery and anguish". This can be overcome, or at least diminished by the overvaluation of what few rewards are left. Thus, personal bonds, and simple norms of propriety and polite discourse usually ensure that sufficient representatives of significant others will offer rewards in quantities large enough to ensure the continuation of the fantasy. The identity claim can be personally judged as successful and the idealized self is once again freed from threat. However, this problem can be

made more difficult for students, as will be shown, who define referent others more narrowly and subsequently it is much more difficult for that person to find satisfactory role partners from which these limited rewards might be obtained.

It is then to the individual and his view of himself that we now turn.

### The Construction of Self

Music education students appear as applicants to the music school from the general school population as highly skilled musical executionists. They have all typically spent many years learning to play trumpets and clarinets and pianos and horns. In comparison to others in their secondary school classes or in private studios, they excelled. They were "musicians" in the school or studio setting and could be easily identified as such. As an applicant to the university music school<sup>8</sup>, although threatened by the entrance protocol, the student usually comes with a high opinion about himself as a performer and claims his right to study music on the basis of this standing<sup>9</sup>. This student's reflection is not atypical.

**Were you a star<sup>10</sup> in high school?**

Yea, the last three years.

**That seems fairly typical doesn't it?**

I was a big fish in a little place. I did three musicals and had the lead all three years and was president of the choir for three

years and band executive all five years, so I was in both the bands and choirs. I was on the student council, just as a music department rep.(M4-7:3)

Once accepted into the music school, the view of self apparently must be re-examined because all of the important self-acknowledged "big fishes" come together into a rather substantially enlarged "pond". This apparently requires, since it is immediately operationalized in the music school, that the students sort themselves out again and establish who is on which step of the performance ladder". Since status is attributed to a greater degree to the higher steps on this performance ladder, it becomes very important to know where exactly you stand. Many students must change their view of themselves as they discover so many others who they acknowledge as playing equally well or even better. Some cling steadfastly to the top rung. This graduate comments as follows.

**Do you know of anybody that's got higher marks in applied than you have and doesn't sing as well ?**

Uh uhm; I was trying to think of somebody that I think doesn't sing as well as I do.(A3:27/8)

There is little doubt about the view that this student holds about herself. But this view is constantly challenged and students are very aware that their own view, either in fact or fantasy, can survive only with reference to the community and the development of "reputation". The idea of a "reputation" is an important career concept because it allows a student to hold a particular view of himself for an extended period of time. As such, a reputation can survive some displays of role non-concurrence.

Certain excuses can be called like sickness to account for role performances which do not meet the expectation of reputation. Exceptionally good performances can move the reputation upward but again only fleetingly<sup>12</sup>. This becomes one of the only ways that students can achieve some status stability in the music school since without "reputation", each person would have to evaluate his view of himself after each performance<sup>13</sup>. Thus consistency becomes important because neither good nor bad performances appear to be able to establish "reputation" and one notices that students who are discussed by others as having this "reputation" are those who typically play consistently well or poorly. Others, without reputations, are evaluated on a performance by performance basis. It is common to hear comments like, "I couldn't believe how well Paul played today" or "I've never heard Paul play so terribly". This student explains.

Exactly, but reputation

**Who's reputation?**

Yours is on the line.

**Why, you're in your room?**

Exactly, but people are walking down the hallways peeking in your window and going, Oh she's playing whatever. Oh she doesn't play that very well, she's having a real rough time, you know. That kind of thing and a lot.(A6:13)

To build a "reputation" as a good performer appears to be a highly desirable thing for a music student to attempt. If he can establish a "reputation" then it becomes a "symbol" which can be viewed from outside to establish a perception by the person

himself as to "who he is". Those without reputations must rely on sporadic clues as to their standing in the music school.

Nevertheless, many music students still appear to have an "idealised" identity. They seem to wish to be seen as performers, even those who admit to themselves they are not. This is hardly news of consequence in a music school that rewards people almost exclusively as performers. But if this image in the mirror travels with the student beyond the borders of the music school, for instance into the classroom, perhaps there is cause for concern. This graduating student at MUN has yet to release the fantasy. She explains.

**...how you see yourself, how you would like me to describe you or how would you describe yourself for that matter.**

Well, I mean in one sense I could say half-jokingly I'd want you to be able say I'm a great performer, I'm a great this, I'm a great something else and in some ways I'd like to be better at certain things than I feel I am.

**What things?**

Well, performance for one. (P2:23)

This next student is a graduate of UWO and has an honours degree in music education. At the time of the interview she was attending the Faculty of Education for her fifth year to qualify for certification as a teacher in Ontario. Her view still focuses on the "musician" aspects of her identity. "Professionally" she is a singer.

I'm a perspective teacher, I'm going to teachers college, I'm female, I'm almost 23. What type of description do you want?

**Professional.**

Okay, well a singer - I'm a soprano (A3:1)

This "musician-performer" who happens to be teaching is a common theme with reference to faculty members at the music schools. Students report that many faculty members, particularly the applied faculty, view themselves as "performers". That they are engaged full-time in instructing students escapes their view of self completely. This student at MUN explains.

I think a lot of them would much more prefer to perform than teach.

**Prefer? Prefer to teach?**

Yea. It almost seems like they are there teaching you because a university job is a paying, 9 to 5, per se, job, that will bring in an income because the performance racket is not, maybe, stable. That is something that crops up every now and then in your mind..(P3:24)

Since students believe that these faculty members really would prefer to be doing something else and because a small part of their function involves actual performance, it seems possible that they delude themselves into a view that performance is really what they do and hence what they are.

To be a competent school music teacher, the universities appear to operate on the assumption that, and it seems to be taken for granted in society in general that one needs to be a reasonably competent "musician". While the definition of "musician" is a point of serious disagreement, students often prefer to view themselves first and

primarily as a "musician" even in the face of apparently more logical perceptions of themselves. This student comments as follows.

I have heard that question before. It's a hard thing to be totally honest about but I think I would like to be seen perhaps first as a musician and then as a teacher.

**Why is that?**

It's probably a terrible thing to say since I am going to be a music teacher in September.(P10:24)

This situation is not dissimilar from the position that some forms of music are perceived as being "evil". Because the teaching profession often alters the definition of "musician" to fit the teacher's needs, some students seem to cling to the music school definition and feel uncomfortable stating their true feelings about wishing to see themselves as "musicians". This is perhaps the most potent form of "side-bet" (Becker, 1960:32-40) made on behalf of the students committed to the music school.

Other possible comparisons within the music school would be with academics, as "students" or even as "developing teachers" in the education stream. But in almost every instance, even with students who did not feel strong as "performers", they preferred to be seen as a musician and would report perceiving social pressure to compare themselves "musically" rather than with these other possible criteria. This example shows this point.

**Is it more important to compare yourself musically to the kids or academically?**

No, I think musically. I don't always think that academically it matters if you're talking about marks and what you see on paper is that what you're referring to? (P6:18)

This view of self was examined with many of the students. No student responded that a "musical" comparison was other than the most important. Here is another example.

**Is one of these comparisons more important to you than another?**

You mean the marks or the age?

**No, musical or academic?**

Oh, I think.....I think the musical part is important.

**So if you had a choice, you would rather have people see you as a good musician?**

Yes. (P5:17)

This next student shows the developing perspective that the university career is too short. As a performer, the time simply is inadequate but the student still prefers to be a better musician than academic.

**Is one comparison more important to you? Would you rather be perceived as a better musician or a better academic?**

I'd rather be a better musician ... performing-wise. I just hit a level this year with the piano where I think I could have gotten into and comfortable with performing but now it is too



late, I've got to leave. But this is the best year in piano yet.(P9:18)

Here is a music education senior who is confident that he wishes to be seen as a "musician". In fact, she describes her schooling as the process of becoming a "musician".

**How do you compare academically?**

Average.

**And is one comparison more important to you than another?**

Yes.

**Which one?**

How I perform.

...

**But why would you want to be compared musically more than academically?**

Because that's what I'm doing here. I'm trying, musically, I'm trying to be a musician. I want to be a musician and that's what I'm interested in. (P7:28)

While it is perhaps odd that students do not see themselves preparing in any significant way to becoming a "teacher" despite registration in an education programme, that appears to be the case. With the exception of "performing", students return to "marks"<sup>14</sup> for an indication of how they see themselves. Even in the music

school where performing is evaluated and "marks" are awarded, they do not appear to have much social significance. This next student views himself as a developing "arranger".

So maybe my work in that area is better than I originally thought so I am willing to accept that too. So my idea of myself as an arranger has gone up in the last year or year and half simply because I am getting good marks in those subjects and when an arrangement or composition of my is performed various performers, or people who hear that piece also give me feedback they say that was good. (P10:11)

Here the student feels that his "marks" as well as role support as an arranger from the students who are performing his pieces offer a framework for his perception of himself in this musical area. The importance of "referent others" here is not to be overlooked. Much of this student's view of himself is based upon the notion that these "referent others" have labelled his work, and hence him as author, as "good".

Thus it appears clear that a student typically sees himself as a "musician" and wishes to be seen by others as a "musician". Having discussed at some length in the earlier section of this analysis the various parameters of the definition of a "musician", it is now necessary to show how students view themselves as "musicians". A typical method of inquiry into identity is simply to ask people to tell you what they do (Kadushin, 1969). Thus if you ask a physician what he does or what he is, the response is typically "doctor". The occupational label is applied as a form of self-identification and that view of self can usually be substantiated by simple observation in that this "doctor" behaves in several of the ways one typically ascribes to that label, depending upon the particular situation. Therefore the normal opening of each of the

interviews began with the instruction, "Tell me about yourself". Occasionally students would step back and ask what in particular was sought but more typically they would respond with the apparent "formal" music school answer, i.e. year and applied major. First year students only would occasionally add their place of origin to the response since a deep identity with the new music school had not really formed. It would be impractical to list all the responses to this request but a few will suffice to demonstrate the overt identification of self with the applied major, in certain instances to such an extent that one might suppose that these people were no more than appendages to the bell of a trumpet or the mouthpiece of the clarinet. Each numbered response below is from a different student.

**Tell me about yourself.**

- (1) I'm from Toronto and I'm a trombone major. That's all. I've been playing trombone since grade 7 and I've had very good teachers and....uh..(M1-1:1)<sup>15</sup>
- (2) I'm a first year student and my major is classical guitar and I'm hopefully going to enter the composition program here.(M1-7:1)
- (3) I came here because I love music. I play bassoon and piano and I love to sing. I don't know? What else would you like to know? (M1-8:1)
- (4) Well I'm a flute major and I come from Toronto and I don't know what you want to know. (M2-4:1)
- (5) Piano major, been playing for 7 years (M2-7:1)
- (6) Well I'm a second year piano major. (M2-10:1)
- (7) I'm a second year student here at Western and I'm a percussion major (M2-12:1)

While it may be supposed that this greeting response is limited to the artificial situation of an interview, it is not. In fact, this is the generally accepted form of social inquiry in the music school. It is how people see themselves and how they organize the others around them. This student explains.

**Why did you tell me as the first thing that you're a piano major?**

Well I just...it's a music institution and whenever you meet somebody in the Faculty, you usually say < what year are you in and what do you play > That's usual.

**Is that sort of a formal greeting?**

Right, well I think so. (M2-10:1)

From another student the same perspective.

**Why when you introduce yourself do you say you're a piano major?**

Well every time you meet somebody in the faculty that the first question...what's your major so you just get used to it. (M2-2:1)

In addition to the formal greeting, it can also be shown that students simply perceive the identity with the applied major as the reason for being in the music school in the first place. Consider this response.

**When I asked you who you were, the only thing you could tell me was that you were a trombone player. Why is that important?**

Well that's what I'm here for and that's what I've been doing all through high school. (M1-1:4)

In fact, when you ask music education students what they study the response is usually an instrument. Although students may be officially studying in an academic major such as music education or musicology, the music education students, at least, respond that they are at university studying "piano".

**And when you ask them what are they studying, what do they say?**

They usually will say piano or trumpet. (E2:8)

In fact, music education majors even after graduation still view themselves as the product of a university programme where they studied "piano". Considering the wide range of musical subjects offered in the undergraduate music education degree programme, the self-identification with the applied major appears to remain secure and unfailing even after advancement into the Faculty of Education. This UWO graduate reports that, "I did my degree in piano and enjoyed it quite a bit"(A11:1). Often students simply tell you that they see themselves as a "piano player". What appears to make "sax" special to this next student is the formal nature of the newness. While "singing" is an old skill, sax appears to be more currently in focus while it is reconstituted from high school days to make the student eligible for inclusion in the instrumental class.

I'm \*\*\*\*\*, I'm 24 on Oct. 1st and I'm a voice major but I'm here for instrumental just because I played sax through high school and I think of myself as a sax player but as a singer too. It's a very ....it's confusing for other people but I've always sang but so I don't think of that as anything special. (A7:1)

In addition to seeing themselves as an instrumental appendage, they also see others in the same way. Certain students are even recognized as a "piano player". At the beginning of the academic year at the Faculty of Education at UWO, the members of the class began by introducing themselves to each other. This was necessary because there were students from other university music schools which had joined the group from the UWO graduating class. In each and every instance, without exception, the response was, "I'm XXXXXX and I'm a piano major" or some equivalent of that such as I'm a pianist, or I play piano. This identity seems to dissipate with time in the Faculty of Education since students who were interviewed a second time at the end of the Education year often related that they had gotten to know members of their own graduating class in a new and different way, that being without reference to their "instrumental" identity. But in the music school students become known as a "piano player" or the "bassoonist" or whatever. This example shows this well.

Uhm ... actually the first one I did meet was in my foundation class and I recognized her from music department. Like I didn't really know her that well because she was a bassoon player but ... because you don't get to socialize very much with others except for piano students and stuff like that so it was kind of neat that I kind of hung around with her (E1:19/20)

Of course, the vocal major has a special problem with identity because his "instrument" is, in fact, part of his body and thus part of his being. Singers more than all other identify themselves with their "instrument". Thus singers become "tenors", "dramatic sopranos" or other more specific labels than just vocalist. In addition, the inability to separate oneself from one's instrument as a singer is often felt as a "curse" or "weight" in the same way as was discussed under "talent". This student explains.

Yea in some ways, although pianist has to fill out space too you know. I think what it comes down too is that your voice is attached to you, you can't ever put it away. So singers tend to get this kind of involvement with their instrument you know and it becomes kind of I don't know like an attachment.

**Yea, that's the nicest way of putting it.**

And you could tell who thought of it like as a curse, you know like I'm cursed with this voice and I can't do anything about it and other people who could do, who are very comfortable with it.

**You mean they have the weight of this enormous talent they're carrying with them all the time. Is that what you mean.**

Yea... (V10:12)

Of course, not all students see themselves as "pianists". Students who view themselves as not very good performers most frequently refer to themselves as "musicians". Thus it is clear that in the music school, "performer" is preferred over "musician" even though reference is frequently made to the performer who is not a "musician". Asked whether the executionist model for self identification was important as a "teacher", this senior at U of A replies,

**Is that a problem for you though.**

A little bit, yea, yea I always felt that they were better than me in piano. Oh yea.

**Why would that be important if you wanted to be a teacher?**

Well because I'm an musician too. (E5:29)

There are those for whom the role and identification with the role as a "star" or just "performer" appears less vital. Again these students are generally more inclined to call themselves "musicians" or other more general terms as "all-round musician" or "well-rounded musician". For some, this "star" category is almost repulsive.

I liked singing in choirs, performing in choirs, I like doing solos in choirs but I don't like singing as a solo performer because of the belief or the facade or this person being a star and kind of like that; I like performing, I like singing ... (A5:24)

For others, it is simply a matter of not clinging to a strong personal identification with the applied major. For these students again, the label of "musician" was sufficient. This student explains.

The instrument itself wasn't the most important thing in my life but the whole music business thing was being a music student was probably the most important thing in my life. (P10:6)



Thus it can be summarized that music education students typically view themselves as either a "performer" on some specific instrument to which there appears to be a strong affiliation as a player or another category of student who views himself as a general "musician". It further appears that this latter category is the perception of self for students who see themselves less able to compete for the "performer" status.

The music education students have many views of themselves with respect to their role within the music school. They are also "students" in the purely academic sense and they take considerable account of themselves in that light. They are also audience, friend, competitor, foe and colleague. One other area that students frequently refer to and should be discussed is the role of "critic". Students view themselves as a "critic" with less than an enthusiastic self-praise. In fact, most students feel rather strongly that, particularly as their social career as a music education student develops, they resent the perceived necessity to act as a "critic" and do not wish to see themselves in such a role. This becomes more detailed in the discussion to follow on "competition" but for the moment can be demonstrated in this excerpt.

**How would they criticize?**

I didn't like her interpretation of that, she was you know a singer, or to be really flat or whatever. Just negative. See the way she is standing on stage or poise is bad, her different things like that.

**Why do you suppose they feel obliged to do that? I suspect they became**

Insecure.

**Did you that too?**

Probably. Yes. Probably more than I like to admit, but

**So you don't think it is necessarily a good trait?**

No, definitely not. (A6:14)

The view of self is particularly "situational" for music education students. With respect to the opening comments that arose from the request to "tell me about yourself", students systematically reported that if the interviews had taken place in some other location like the social science building "up the hill" for example, that the response to the statement would be something to the effect that they were "music students" or "music majors". Only if pressed would they continue to explain their applied major and programme. This is well documented in the transcripts but this analysis is primarily interested in the view of self within the music school and as such it would appear to suffice to comment simply that their identity as a "performer" or "musician" appears situated.

Furthermore, is important to remember that these students have other facets of their lives beyond the music school and as such see themselves as brother, sisters, sometimes parents, neighbours and all other sorts of social roles that make up the identity complex in the greater social world in which they live.

## Notes for Chapter Seven

1. see Hargreaves, D (1978) "Whatever happened to Symbolic Interactionism?" for a thorough reconsideration of the basic tenets of SI. An earlier thorough position may be found in Rose, A. (1962) "A Systematic Summary of Symbolic Interactionism" in Rose, A (1962) Human Behaviour and Social processes. Houghton-Mifflin.

2. see Woods (1983) Sociology and the School. p. 1

3. Woods, P (1979) refers to career as a "progression of events" and uses this construct to explain "showing-ups". He writes, "the exposed person [to the showing-up] experiences an assault on his 'identity' and feels confusion, since his previous identity was the basis of others' expectations of him" (p.125). Music education students appear to experience this same kind of "assault" since they too, base so much of their identity on the expectations of Others.

4. refer back to the discussion of "professionalism" where the point was raised about "Qualifying Associations" and the notion of "legal right" to employ the label as "doctor" or "lawyer" for example.

5. For a particularly strong diatribe against the "static" notion of "role" see Coulson, M. "Role: a redundant concept in sociology? Some educational considerations" in J.A.Jackson (ed.) (1972) Role: Sociological Studies 4. Cambridge University Press.

6. another possible omniscient observer's comment. There is a constant challenge to determine whether the student is able to construct an identity as a "teacher" at the same time this apparently strong need to construct as "Musician self" seems so important.

7. Becker's (1960) "side-bet"

8. Kingsbury (1984:11) writes, "admission to the music school is generally awarded in terms of a high level of skill in a very narrowly conceived area".

9. Kingsbury (1984:38) points out that "conservatory musicians continually treat the terms "music" and "musical" as concrete terra firma categories in their explanatory statements in spite of the fact that these notions are highly contingent and occasionally self-contradictory". I would hasten to add that the term "musician" seems, in everyday usage, to be treated by members of music school in a similar fashion. This is perhaps not surprising considering the inter-connection between or among these three categories. It is not surprising that Kingsbury omitted this category "musician" since his study, although using the perspectives and meanings of the conservatory

"musicians", focused more centrally on the actual social construction of the category of "music" itself.

10. student's construct!

11. This rather linear model is not exactly the best metaphor since the nature of the "musician" as a social construct allows for a vast, almost infinite variations. But, despite this, there is still a sense that, once having accepted a social definition, the students resort to more "simplistic" normative scale. They certainly talk quite openly about the "best" and "playing better". They also appear to accept a "community" view of how students are ranked as "musicians".

12. see Norris, Steve (1983) where he attempts to show that for the purposes of evaluation, a good [academic] performance can only result from ability to do so but a less than good [academic] performance can result from a variety of factors. This, he suggests, means that the "true" or "real" academic ability is only evident in a good performance. In other words, good performances cannot happen by accident, but poor ones can! Music students do not seem to accept the display of a good performance with this same conviction, however, they do acknowledge the idea that there are many reasons for not performing well.

13. This construct is not too dissimilar to the notion of "type stabilization" discussed in Hargreaves et al. (1975:186). The difference seems to rest in the fact that typification appears to generalise social actors into simplistic and somewhat static categories. The "reputation" of a "musician" as used in this context does not say anything about the nature of the person as "musician" but speaks more to a normative comment about the present level of stability. Of course, one has a "common-sense" understanding that a person can have a reputation as a "type" of musician. Such vocabulary is common in the music school: good, bad, musical, technician, but the way in which music students "type" performers is far too complex to establish any simple list of available types. Therefore I return to a more career model of "reputation" and it is a student construct and used by them in this way.

14. see Becker (1968) Making the Grade

15. note use of city of origin by this 1st year student.



## Referent Others

### Self and Valued Others

If persons interact with others, it is likely that the views held by some of these other persons will be held to be more significant than those of some others depending upon the time and situation. Sociologists have referred to this "group" ["Others"] as "reference group". In some situations these "groups" can be individuals and are better described as "significant others" where as Hughes (1962:120) writes both the degree of one's sensitivity to others as well as the selection of the others is important. Often the perspectives of others are so aligned that they form into groups which share the same view of the situation. These groups become "reference groups" when as Shibutani (1962:128) writes that group "whose presumed perspective is used by an actor as the frame of reference in the organization of his perceptual field". In the case of the music education students, where it has been previously shown to be the case that they generally consider the "performer's world" both as a better world and a world for which they consider themselves eligible, we are reminded of Merton's writings (1957:288-292) that suggest that people who are eligible for membership in a group to which they aspire are more likely to respond to its demands. Shibutani

(1962:140) claims that "one widely entertained hypothesis comes from the experimental study of small groups: a person tends to comply with the norms of the group that he finds more attractive". It is, therefore, of some concern to trace the "reference groups" which are taken into account by music education students in the music school.

Having identified that the music education students appear to seek to construct an identity as a musician and that the musician category seems infinitely variable in social definition and further that much of the ability to make the claim on a musician identity rests with the reactions of Others, the analysis can now attempt to unpack the perceptions of who these Others might be.

Kingsbury (1984:113) writes,

"Being a student here has been very hard for me", said an undergraduate who had transferred into the conservatory from an "Ivy League" university. "I wouldn't say it's so much a social difficulty", she continued, "as political. I've never experienced politics before, all this cordial chit chat, but people always have their ulterior motive." This student had been unable to make a place for herself in the conservatory woodwind clique, and was on that account quite ambivalent regarding her own self-image as a musician. She perceived her inability to "crack" the clique as being related in part to her performing skills, or rather, to their lack: "If you're good, then things are okay." There can be little doubt, however, that her inability to make her way into the woodwind clique was tied to the fact that she was very unhappy with her own teacher...

Kingsbury has identified two of the major reference groups<sup>1</sup> within the music school, the applied teacher and the cliques of like-instrument performers. This excerpt

also shows the strong desire to join a group which might provide support for a student as "musician". In fact, this student's analysis of her situation is that her claim as being a "musician" might be questioned as a result of not being able to "crack" the clique. The students typically organize themselves into like instrument cliques and secondly they are tied through these groupings to the teachers who instruct these instruments. Although this student's perception from the outside would lead the observer to conclude that the "clique" is a structurally conceived group with strong boundaries<sup>2</sup>, a closer analysis shows that the boundaries on the exterior side of the clique are quite similar to the exterior boundaries of the music school. The boundaries are clear to the outsider but once within, the group erects further internal boundaries<sup>3</sup>. Because Kingsbury's interest lies in another direction, he does not pursue the notion of the significance of social referents further.

The significance of reference groups as an analytical tool is outlined by Hargreaves (1975:13). Hargreaves reports on Kelly's (1952) types of reference groups, normative and comparative. These two types appear to be very important for music education students, the former as a group to which a student might wish to join and assume the group's norms and values and the latter, a group the student might use to compare with his own situation to estimate his own social position as a musician. Students using a normative reference group may also come to "perceive the world from its standpoint. Yet this group need not be one in which he aspires for acceptance" (Shibutani, 1955:109).

Music education students surprisingly do not appear to hold the world's music stars as significant idealized referents. While they are usually aware of the performers on their principal instrument who are recognized world-wide as the best performers



and they typically use recordings of these soloists as models for their own performance, it is to persons much more closely connected to themselves that they compare themselves with as performing or personal models or as "operational" referent others. While some students do have "idealized" referent others, most particularly singers who often compare their voices with those of famous singers, most other instrumentalists appear not to.

Occasionally, students would admit that before coming to the university they had "idols" such as various rock stars or groups and that they wanted to grow up being just like these idols.. This graduate at UWO recalls his past dreams.

.. from that time I knew I wanted to do something with music a little at that time being so young I always wanted, you know, to be a rock star or whatever.

**But now you're in, you wanted to be a rock star.**

Yea for a while, well actually for quite a while. Umm ... with my you know, my idol being the Beatles and Paul McCartney especially all our lives we're much too young to really know anything about them when they were together so umm ... from that until, you know, until I was 16 maybe a little bit less 15 or something.(A5:2/3)

Other students appear focused on specific performing areas such as opera or in this case the musical theatre, i.e. Broadway.<sup>4</sup>

Because it's important to me and it's important that I get to where I want to be. Like that I reach my goal.

**What's your goal?**

My first goal...it changed, well I'd really like to be on Broadway, but I've never had the money or the time to learn

how to dance. But my voice is really suited for Broadway. I'm a vocal major. And I would love to do it cause I get the best energy and the best feeling being on stage. So I think the next best thing would be opera. So I guess that my first goal would be to be in the Canadian Opera Company, my first big step. I don't know what would be under that. To be in between that, do you know what I mean.(M1-4:1)

Other students had general groups of people that they looked up to when still in high school. This was usually in situations where better music students got together for special events such as festivals<sup>5</sup> or music camps. This provided each of the participants a chance to compare their own performance abilities with the others who attended. Many students expressed their fears that they would not compare favourably with the others that they encountered in such settings. This example highlights this impression.

I think from watching other people .....like I had been in concert band before I had even gone to university and had gone through music camps and things and I think I looked up to a lot of people, thinking, my God I could never do what they do.(P3:2)

Students who reported personal idols or role models were usually pointing to school music teachers, university applied professors or occasionally community musicians. But in each case, it was someone with whom the student has had some personal interaction rather than some distanced "star". This process began early for many students and in some instances was the reason they chose music to study at university or why they chose a particular institution. This example from a fourth-year student at UWO who recalls,

It is interesting to see how his voice characteristics come up in his students, just his techniques, his methods and things. I really enjoyed it \*\*\*\*\* (accompanist) was the teacher that taught the pedagogy class and he sort of always been an idol of mine. He came to adjudicated me once when I was about 12 in competition ....(M4-9:54)

The applied teacher at the university often becomes the idol for the aspiring music student. While faculty members typically perform better than most students<sup>6</sup>, the level of performance or perhaps the gap between their level of performance and that of the students, particularly the better ones, may appear possible to close and thus represent a real possibility to reasonably emulate. Thus applied instructors who performed frequently were not unusually selected for that reason as role models. This account from Edmonton explains,

I remember my teacher, xxxxxx, he performs quite a bit and to me I kind of look up to him in a sense that he can do that [perform], he can also teach me but it's not like a ... he just knows how to do it, that he can actually put it in performance, he knows how it's supposed to feel like, he knows how to feel when I'm in performing so I think in a way it's good to do that and you get a lot of respect from the students and I respect my teacher in the sense that way.

**Because he performs?**

Yea.....(E1:32/3)

Another student idolizes his teacher simply because he's a great player. Bluntly explained as follows,

**Tell me about your teacher.**

Here? Uh...good player, great player, great player and he can demonstrate I think that's probably the best thing about the lessons with him. He could demonstrate what he wanted perfectly and that's one of the greatest things like I said before. If you listen, it's up to you to make the connection as to what you have to do.

**Did this person perform publicly a lot?**

Yes, yes.(A12:13)

Certain criteria are applied by the students when assessing their applied teachers. In Newfoundland, having come "from away", that meaning from off the island somewhere, represented the notion that this person would bring outside experiences to the students. Reputation was also important. This reputation was, however, largely the fabrication of the music school in the first instance. The better the school could make each in-coming member of faculty look in the eyes of the students, the better the institution would look to itself in the mirror. Thus good new colleagues made the old colleague better as well by association.

This student at MUN recalls her first impressions about her voice teacher. Again she admits to having "looked up to her". Voice students more than any other sub-group identified their applied teacher as the single most important role model.

**Let's talk about your professors now when you first came.  
Did anybody stand out?**

Well, I think definitely in good ways my voice teacher right away because that was what I was interested in.

**And how she stand out?**

I looked up to her and thought she was, you know, something great and I thought she had studied away and I had heard lots of good things about her and I thought she was one of the greatest ones in the world.(P7:12/3)

Some students were more colourful in their description of their faculty "idols" as this account from a fourth-year student at UWO demonstrates.

The students and teachers. But there was always, you know, a very almost like - I worshipped him personally cause he was everything I wanted to be. He had knowledge, he was involved in a lot of other choirs, he did a lot of instrumental music and things. He really seemed to enjoy his music.(M4-9:6)

The notion that certain teachers represented models of exactly what students wanted for themselves was frequently reported. Another singer reports,

Well, I guess reason is because she (singing teacher) went there. OK, and I wanted to be like her, as good as her, and maybe even better someday if that's possible. That was the first reason.(M1-4:4)

Yet another singer tells that her adulation for her applied professor was the result of the performing prowess displayed by this teacher.

**Were you impressed with the fact that she was doing all this singing.**

Yes I was. I was impressed by how she could sing, how she did get into it, how she knew the world of the performing world and I think if you're going to be a round music teacher and be

able to bring something to the student that they're after, if they're after performance how can you give it to them ... if you're not experienced.(A5:24)

"Reputation" in the music school, as well as internally constructed at the time the new faculty member joins the music school, is affected in the long run by the faculty member's public reputation. This is the subject of further analysis with respect to exterior validations but here it is important to point out that students appear to be impressed and thus model themselves after faculty members who can display a "public reputation" to members inside the community. This UWO student explains.

**But this teacher did a lot of performing?**

Yea.

**Did that matter to you?**

No.

**Not at all?**

Well when I first got there and I found out that this guy was teaching me piano and I've seen his name on posters so I was pretty impressed but then ...

**Why would you be impressed?**

Well whenever you see a name, a public figure or something and then you find out you are going to be one-on-one with them for a whole year of course you are going to be impressed at first.(M4-6:29)

This student grew away from this teacher and began to establish other criteria for determining who he might aspire toward. This notion of public profile has appeared

before with reference to applied teachers playing on CBC<sup>7</sup> and with outside orchestras. In fact, the stance that these applied teachers are really "performers" and that as such are "professionals" appears to be the only proof needed in the eyes of students to maintain the image of the music school as a professional school. Thus students often refer to their applied professors as "professionals" which differentiated them from the professors who otherwise are teachers at the university, such as a theorists or typically a music education professor. This account displays this point.

**So let's go back and talk about your trombone teacher again.**

I like him. He's a professional but he's not quite what I would expect to being a trombone teacher. Like you'll start playing and he'll pick up a paper and start reading. To me that's not right. Like if you don't want to listen, just tell me to shut up or at least tell me what I can do differently to play better. He's kind of funny that way but that is the way he is.

**What do you mean he's professional?**

Well I presume that many of the teachers here are professional.

**What's that mean?**

Like they're accomplished musicians. They know their stuff and they can convey that to you, most of them play in orchestras or stuff.(M3-4:17)

This reputation is even quantified by some students. It would be highly unlikely that any student in Canada would have the information needed to make such a judgment as follows considering the number of institutions and the size of the country. Nevertheless, where this reputation can be produced, it is quickly used both by students and faculty<sup>8</sup>.

**What do you know about them?**

I know that \*\*\*\*\* is very educated, very good musician and great performer and probably I would say one of the best one of the top three best teachers in Canada...(A5:21)

Actually, this reputation was often the source of some conflict in the community. Since students are able to accumulate status by affiliation with certain groups who study with specific applied teachers, the reputation of the teacher is often called into question. Thus students who identify strongly with these professors are wont to defend the reputation in order to protect their own status as a member of the teacher's affiliation group. This account from a UWO graduate.

**Is that what most students believe, do they believe that reputation?**

I think so.

**So you would get in big fights if you were sitting around with this conversation wouldn't you?**

Yea.(A5:20)

This notion of reputation by affiliation has been discussed earlier but since respect for the teacher and the likelihood that students use respected teachers as models it is worth once again pointing out this perceived reality. This example shows that this teacher gains status (and thus student respect) not because of personal abilities or reputation but solely on the basis that he is an affiliate of the status group which had studied with Horowitz. Kingsbury (1984:143) writes,



My selection for this latter category was a class in chamber music performance, and was of particular interest to me because of its renowned teacher, Marcus Goldman. Goldman is internationally famed both as a concert pianist and as a pedagogue, and, as a former student of the legendary Arthur Schnabel, is a prominent scion in one of the most celebrated of music pedagogical lineages.

This UWO graduate explains his teacher's lineage to Horowitz,

**How did you respect him, for what did you respect him?**

Well because I never heard him play except for the little things that he did in my lesson and that time it was his reputation because he was you know a student of Horowitz and ... (A5:13)

Students defend their idols with any case that might possibly be built, whether based on fact or fancy. This has, of course, a reciprocal status benefit to the students by affiliation. Those students of the "best" teachers gather the most status points. Therefore, any opportunity to elevate the teacher's status, by affiliation, elevated the status available to the student. This student at MUN, for example, tried desperately to defend her teacher (again a singer) by claiming that adjudicators who came to St. John's may hold the same academic positions in other universities but that this did not for a moment mean that they were the equal of her teacher.

But I wouldn't say that they have the same, for one education, or they have the same job perhaps, maybe the same job but they are not the same people not saying that my teacher here is like someone great because I don't believe that for a second, I mean she's helped me a lot but I mean I don't believe it that she's the greatest thing in Canada or anything like that, but I do know that say another person that evaluates me is not on the same

level as my teacher. No way near; they may occupy the same jobs but they don't have anyone near the same sort of knowledge or the same attitude on things, period.(P7:25)

Actually this is a curious argument in that, while the teacher is not held up to be the best in Canada or for that matter not even a great teacher, outsiders who hold similar university posts are seen to be less knowledgeable or able a priori.

Students were often able to report on individuals who had been role models to them but had fallen from grace or individuals who should have been eligible for this relationship but did something that blocked the students ability to look up to this individual. One report from Edmonton comes from a student who held her band teacher in high school up as a great teacher only to find out one day that he did not know certain musical things that this student was herself beginning to become aware of. This excerpt from the interview transcript outlines her concerns.

He was a band director he wasn't a music teacher.

**What's the difference?**

Well this guy was a great band director, he was in the United States Marine Corps Band, he was educated in States and he came up and took over our music program and I call him a band director because he was interested in putting something together that was visible and audible and I suppose that's what made him such a success in the community is because his forte was putting out concerts, music festivals, he was generating a product which was a band and when it came to teaching things like music theory, music appreciation, what not in class, very little of that went on, because I remember being in stage band and he didn't know anything about jazz improvisation whatsoever and when it came time for somebody to solo well he just told them well just wing that, you know, he really had not clue about it at all and that was something I really didn't realize until I left high school. But, you know, he didn't stress

theory, you know, he was interested in generating bands and generating bands that sounded good and looked good and went on and won competitions and you know.(E8:18)

Other students were impressed by their applied teachers but were unimpressed by the fact that their performing schedules took time away from the student. Reputation is fine, but the students still have a legitimate claim on the instruction they are paying to receive. From UWO this report,

Oh yea, I would say so. (why) It has a certain relevance to your musical activity. I guess with \*\*\*\*\* it didn't and with \*\*\*\*\*, it wasn't so much that he performed but that he was away so much. It's hard to establish a relationship with a teacher who's not there much. I mean, \*\*\*\*\* would come in and make up lessons and you'd have three lessons in a week. I don't want three lessons in a week. I want a lesson and then work on stuff for a while. I don't feel like I have to pay money to accommodate somebody's concert schedule. If you want to concertize, go. If you're teaching at an institution, let's do the job, that's supposedly is spelled out in your contract.(A8:9)

Other teachers apparently lose respect and with it the opportunity to become a significant referent for some students because they overuse "false" praise. Students in music appear to need constant praise largely because they are obliged to continually validate their claim as a "musician", but "false" praise is more damning than no praise. This fourth-year student at UWO explains.

Yah she does a lot of good things with voices, she seems very interested but I was with her for two years and I don't really have the best of feelings towards her and I think she is very fake in a lot of ways.

**How do you know, what's fake?**

Well the way she teaches like she acts, maybe this is the way the best teachers are, but she acts as if you're such a wonderful singer and I think she puts false hopes into people that don't need those hopes of you're being a professional singer.

**You mean they're already singers, let's not push it?**

Yah, exactly.

**Do she do much performing?**

Yes she does.(M4-1:36/7)

And finally, students report that when more information about their idols that conflicts with the impressions that they currently hold, these people often slip from grace. This student idolized her high school music teacher because of the total love of music and commitment that he showed to the student in the school. However when this student who felt the same way about music found out that her teacher's love for music expired at the school steps, she was crushed. In her own words,

I found out later that that was a total farce and as soon as he came in the door at his home he had nothing to do with music, he was a tennis pro. So that shattered my dreams...(M4-9:6)

Music education students appear to hold persons as role models<sup>9</sup> who the students have personal interaction with rather than "world" artists. The usual person selected is the applied instructor at the university. This person often replaces the former private music teacher or the high school teacher and new knowledge and growing and changing standards from the university often make these former idols fall from grace. Students in high school often look up to other students but once in the university music community this is seldom admitted. Students use as role models persons whom

they respect and this respect is typically based upon the performing abilities of the teacher or the reputation of the teacher. Because students gain status by affiliation with certain teachers, their defence of the respect they hold for these teachers serves the students themselves as equally as it does the members of faculty and students do defend their idols within the community. The only instance recorded in the field notes where a student compared himself to a world artist whom he idolized, the other students saw this as a disgraceful presumption and the topic was more or less withdrawn quickly. It might be supposed from this that the students can compare their own performing abilities on a greater venue than the "closed" community need address. Thus "excellence" can be defined internally and this provides accessible standards to which the students can expect to strive towards and achieve. Music education students claim to be more aware of this than performance majors whom they see as out of touch with reality. The music education students' reality can remain within the "closed" community but the performance major eventually must surface in the world community and standards inside the university often do not reflect those beyond its walls. We turn now to an attempt to unpack the referent others as they join this "closed" community.

Students appear to gain social entrance into the music school community quickly. This was seen in the explanations offered with respect to the "frosh" week at UWO. Once inside, students begin to sort out the music school into individuals and groups who can help them make sense of what is going on. This student recalls this experience.

**How would that happen, I mean, how do you define that?**

I guess feeling a part of things, being involved in things. I was in the band, there's eighty people there as well as the conductor and whoever else is in charge and you know you're suppose to be there and you're there and you're part of that group. I have a relationship with my piano teacher, you know I'm there at a certain time every week, she's there and we do this and then I have, you know, just being at a certain place, not so much being at a certain place at a certain time and being there when you're suppose to, after you do that as a routine for a certain period of time, obviously that comes to getting to know people, not in personally but just getting to know that you're there and they're there and that you feel comfortable being there, that's when you start to feel part of it, it's not, it's not a physical thing, like just because you're there it doesn't mean you're a part of it, part of being there, you have to feel that part of being there and I did start feeling that after... (M4-3:21/22)

First year students begin by recognizing "others" who belong to their various potential groups<sup>10</sup>. When they first go to class they seek out students they have met during the frosh week and sit with them. Because the academic year appears to form a major "reference group" for music education students, this becomes a very important beginning to the process of sorting out the community. This first year at UWO comments.

**Where did you sit?**

In the middle of the room because there were people I knew sitting there.

**What people that you knew.**

The people from frosh week, I walked in and looked for people I knew.(M1-8:9/10)

Some students have an advantage because they have previous acquaintances or friends already in the music school. Thus the student could get "insider" information at the outset from someone already entrenched within the music school.

**OK aside from that, did you have any other experiences, in your first days there?**

First days there, uhm I was lucky because I knew someone, I knew someone there. (A7:10)

Quite often students would report that they knew people from their former high schools or had older brothers or sisters who were attending the music school. This was viewed as a very positive help to the incoming student.

Most students quickly learned to differentiate between groups of people they call acquaintances and those who became friends.

I was on students council since first year and I wouldn't call a lot of these people my friends, I'd call them acquaintances, I mean, I might know 150 people but I'm not going to call them all and say <would you like to go to a movie>. But that was...acquaintances are just as important as friends are I think. (A9:20)

But as this student points out, acquaintances are perceived as important socially just as friends are. One of the major reasons for that is that the music school as a whole is typically viewed by the students as one "reference group". This is consistent with the notion of the music school as an "insider" community. Considering the degree to which the music school is perceived as a "closed" society, it is little wonder

that students use the music school perspective to build their own identity on campus. This student comments on the basic fact that the music students were "all like me".

**So that was a decision that you made?**

Yep! I was going to balance the two but I liked the music better, I like the people better.

**What do you like about them?**

I don't know, they're all like me. I mean we get along and we all have the same interests. So...(M1-9:10)

The first socially defined groups, that is compared to those groups academically organized, seem to establish in the cafeteria and the various lounges within the music building at UWO. Each music school seems to have the equivalent spaces. Often, as is the case at UWO, the various lounges are seen by the students generally as reserved for specific groups of students such as the second floor lounge that is the domain of the "performance major". The main lounge at UWO, which also serves as the lobby for the concert hall, is the most eclectic meeting ground for students. All years meet there but there appears to be more first and second year students than older ones. Most of this can be accounted for by the fact that the older students have previously sorted out their social groups and thus do not need to participate in the main lounge "action". However, the population in this lounge shifts substantially hour by hour and it also is the main traffic centre for all of the music making facilities in the music building. Thus all the music students have many opportunities to interact with others in this lounge frequently on any day of the week. This is the location for most of the "gossip" in the music school and the place where students can go to seek help or just information on almost any aspect of the music school. It is a very important



"reference group" but is unusual because, as a group, it has no specific definition nor membership. Nevertheless, the information obtained from this random collection is taken to heart and is acted upon. While it is perhaps a simple "representative" for the music school population as a whole, it is regularly identified as the source of the information or attitude. This one further example will demonstrate this.

**Had anyone told you anything about music history before you went to the class?**

Yea, just that it was hard. The people who had taken it told me, just the people in the lounge. I asked them and my brother had a hard time with it too when he was here.(M1-1:10)

The newcomers identify the upperclassmen as an identifiable group to which particular attention must be paid. The reciprocal is not case. The new members of the community use the senior students to advance them information about academic matters but more particularly as a reference point with respect to the performing "standard". In fact, memories of the senior students by the present senior students usually centre upon the apparent superior performing prowess that these older members of the community demonstrated.

**Did you have any impressions of the senior students?**

None in particular that I can remember, except that probably that they were really good at their instrument or something. If I had heard somebody.....that's about all. (P1:4)

Academically, the senior students provided clues as to the nature of the community.

### Who told you?

Generally, as a first year class we were told by senior people of the school. (A4:20)

In fact, the "standard" that the seniors displayed was often taken as a frightening point of reference by the newcomers. It is important to remember that the new students have just survived the entrance audition as a first contact with the music school and as has been previously shown, this often results in undermining the confidence that these students have with respect to a claim as a "musician". This means that from this point forward the definition of "musician" is perceived as controlled by the music school from "inside", thus abolishing any risk of contamination in the definition from "outside". This student explains.

Ah ... from hearing from hearing even just walking by practice rooms you can tell the kind of music that's going on. I guess many of the time I was sort of scared by the sound of the senior students...(A5:10)

The music school provides other "reference group" forming possibilities for students through the participation in the various performing ensembles. It has been demonstrated that these various ensembles are ranked according to status and it might be supposed that members of the different ensembles, may as a consequence, share differing perspectives.

Within the ensembles themselves, students see other students as a group which has skills that serve as an indicator of music school standards and values.

No, no, we had choir rehearsal the first day. I'd never experienced someone like \*\*\*\*\*. I'd never really sung and didn't know if I could sing. Just in this mob concert choir that fortunately \*\*\*\* was conducting that year. Like was like whooooo! And of course you think gee everyone around here sounds like they can read how come I can't read, gee they can all sing, how come I can't sing, boy, you know it was really strange, all the mental stuff that goes on. (A8:3/4)

At U of A, the music school faculty organize regular wine and cheese get-togethers for staff and students. But in addition to serving as a social gathering, they also are viewed by the students in music education as opportunities to build particularly discreet groups which are then seen as groups with a singular perspective. Thus they become a form of "normative reference group"<sup>11</sup> in much the same way as the collection of persons in the main lounge at UWO. The composition of the group may be fluid but the perspective more or less constant. This U of A student explains.

I feel really uncomfortable around the profs anyways but I guess they just go there and you socialize and they talk about the courses you're taken and the courses you are in and what's happening in the music world. It's like you're noticed more, you're rewarded more if you know more to talk about. If you know more about Bach or Handel or Beethoven or something in the field or some kind of composer or something like that; you end up talking to someone more important or something, you can talk to your profs in the sense of that language, you know, it's not like in a common social room where anything can pop up, the atmosphere is very, you know, music is still quite thick. (E1:11)<sup>12</sup>

The most common "normative reference group" after one's academic year is the instrumental group to which a student belongs. The status derived by being affiliated to the group simply because you play a certain instrument does not in every case appear to enjoin you to the "normative reference group". Where students do not play well or refuse to participate in the perspective of performance that the group holds, they can expect to be held outside the group membership list. We are reminded of the example quoted from Kingsbury (1984) earlier where the girl's distress in the music school was in large part attributable to the fact that she was unable to "crack" into the performance group clique.

Nevertheless, this particular group passes opinions and judgements about people and events within the music school. In this instance, the reference group also provides a "comparative" service to the students. It is common to hear students comment that "all the oboists agree...". This example from the transcripts is typical.

**Did you know anything about him before the lesson?**

Not much. All the trombone players in second year and up say he's really good and that they had helped them a lot. (M1-1:13)

Friendships often develop between members of these instrumentally defined sub-groups and these sub-groups are frequently viewed by the students as having their own perspectives and membership characteristics. It might be claimed that music education students operate in a phenomenological sense, assuming a high degree of intersubjectivity, i.e. recognising a prevailing consensus. Thus generalizations derive

from the projections of these characteristics and the groups become identified with these projected typifications so that as a result, trumpet players are seen as loud and brash<sup>13</sup>, singers are weird and conceited and whatever else appear to have other typified projections. While certain members of these groups seem to project these ascribed characteristics, many appear not to. But the generalizations persist in any case. For example,

And I hang around her friends and most of my music friends.

**Who are they?**

Mostly voice majors actually. A few voice majors, one piano major, well few piano majors I don't as a general rule like piano majors. Because everybody; they're introverted, I don't like that.

**Is that right?**

Yea (4-1:34)

Other instrumental groups formed around almost all other applied majors.

**So you did talk to other people about that.**

Yea, there was a certain organ fraternity. It was really small, I mean it was really funny because so much money had been spent on practice facilities and everything.<sup>14</sup> (A8:10)

"Reference groups", as "groups in which a person seeks membership" (Hargreaves, 1975:13), were also identified as more generally contained within the music school. In fact, students often related that they found the music school was adequate to meet all of their social requirements. Again it is important to point out

that friends as a collective term cannot be necessarily interpreted as a "reference group" although at the same time, friends can be shown to share enough common ideology as to suggest that they serve, perhaps individually, as "referent others" and thus collectively as a group.

**Who are your friends?**

Names?

**No, just who are they and where do they come from?**

All over the place, everything from a saxophone, piano, voice, trombone and guitar majors. Basically we're all across the board. We're not all trombone majors.

**But you're all musicians.**

Oh yea. This is a very close knit place. I don't know very many people outside the faculty whatsoever.

**Does that bother you?**

Not really. Because I have found everything I need here. I don't feel, well I know other people in classes up the hill, if they're in my class all year, chances are I'll get to know their name. But I don't go out with them or anything. (M3-4:23)

The most common description of the sub-groups in the music school is "clique". These often seem to appear without reason in a situation which is apparently conducive to the formation of such groups. Some are relatively stable and have rather strict entrance and maintenance requirements. This senior at MUN explains.

**Is that the deciding factor in the formation of your group?**

Not entirely-no because again getting back to....harking back to really one of the earlier questions. I don't tend to gravitate towards people whom I don't respect either as musicians or academics or intellectuals, I should say, but if I were to exam my clique now which is rather a small one, I would say essentially it is made up of people who are, in my eyes, at least, reasonably competent musicians and intellectually stimulating to speak to. (P8:12)

Some other referent groups grew out of single episodes such as a "critic" circle after a concert. Since some students would report that they disagreed with both the necessity for such behaviour as well as the opinions expressed by the group they found themselves in, for at least these students, the reference group might be best considered "negative". The group dynamic and the apparent need to remain within the group, however, appeared stronger than the will of the individual to leave. This UWO graduate reports.

Oh yes. Well I found that people would jump on the technical aspects of the performance. You know, you'd get out into the foyer for the ....at intermission and people would say | < < oh wow, did you hear those god awful tenors > >

**Why do you suppose they would do that?**

I think a lot of it would be so that they would.....to seem like they knew what was going on....like that they had been listening and they had picked up all these things and they wanted to make the rest of the world aware of it. (A2:7/8)

This student explains that, while this critic clique might object to her performance, her friends would not. Whether we might take the view that the "friends" might be seen as colouring their opinions for the protection of a greater need, that being friendship, cannot go unchallenged. Thus as will be shown later in

this analysis, display of support for one's performance is as critical as any form of "honest" appraisal of one's right to claim as a "musician". On the other hand, many of the criticisms made by the "critic clique" appear often to be comments designed to maintain the superiority of those making the comments rather than any attempt to offer any substantive criticism. This UWO student reports her view of this issue.

**What makes you so nervous then?**

I think I'm afraid maybe people are going to judge me when I get up there.

**Do you think that happens?**

Yes and no. It depends on the person, like if it's a person that doesn't like me or doesn't like something about me or something I do, then they are going to say <look at her, she's screwing up > type of thing but not my friends. They wouldn't do something like that.

**You mean that your friends wouldn't judge you?**

No, they'd judge my performance but not....they wouldn't be really critical of it. (M2-9:4)

Many other students report a sense that they cannot escape interaction in this type of sub-group. Furthermore, they sense that the group of students has a power and life of its own to which they often submit. Not infrequently it is a group of individuals who have little real information but who wish to appear to on top of a situation. Thus, with the little information they have, or with whatever can be fabricated with believability, the group becomes a "negative reference group" to which some students have an aversion but nevertheless participate in by expressing the opinions and values promoted by this group. This MUN student explains.



In some sense yes, because you're around, you're surrounded by these people and you're in a building where you cannot get away and it's, it's you cannot help it being in on it, sort of sitting there and having nowhere else to go but sit there and listen to it half the time.

**Do you feel pressured to contribute?**

Me as a person, no.

**Do you think other people do?**

Yes, definitely. Most definitely, especially younger kids coming in, first years coming in.

**What happens?**

Well, they form a group. It forms a group either for or against something. And most of it is pressure and it's from younger, not necessarily younger, the majority may be younger people because they don't really know what to expect and they are sort of in limbo whether they would feel that way about themselves or should they go along. I guess actually I did experience that in my first year. You look back and you say that you don't but I'm sure I did, especially in the old building. (P7:12/3)

Quite often students appear to escape interaction with these sub-groups but nevertheless they serve as negative models of reference. Thus students use these reference groups not as support for their position but as a way of demonstrating the values and ideologies which they do not support.

**And you're not?**

Not with everybody. I mean I've never done anything so that people would hate me but I get afraid of people with that snobbish look and I stay with others. I'm not a performer, I'm not snobbish. I like people and I think that has a lot to do with why I want to be a teacher, cause I like people. Music is really

great to teach, it's always around. I like music. I like every kind of instrument. (M2-3:14)

At U of A, the situation between the education students and the music students was so clearly one of separation that each served as a particularly obvious "reference group" to use as an ideological barrier with each other. Thus the situation became entrenched at opposite poles, each group serving as a negative reference group to the other and turning social action into a form of "self-fulfilling prophecy" (Merton, 1949)<sup>15</sup>.

**But then after, I guess what I'm trying to find out is one half, did that tend to help your relationship with the music students or did it push you even farther apart.**

Well it didn't help, I don't think we could have been much farther apart really. I honestly, I had nothing to do with them these four years, nothing and that's unreal but that's how it's been. (E5:13)

Further evidence of this group perspective comes from a UWO senior who claims to have decided not to participate in the sub-group in question. But it is interesting to read what students see as the power of the group and the expectation of sub-group conformity.

Well because they have each other and to them that's, you know they have in their social groups, who they want to have and if you're there you're there and if you're not you're not. I'm not because I choose not to be and if I choose to be, I'd be there.

**I suppose that's true.**

And they don't, they don't you know, and as an individual in that group they probably realize that now even as a group, when they get together as a group their thoughts change, or their group thoughts and the group thinks everybody who is here should be here and everybody who shouldn't be isn't, so to speak.

**So do you like these people?**

Yea. (M4-3:24)

Other students reported their reactions to the various "cliques" in the music school. Often they felt as though the particular sub-group existed in order to screen potential candidates to its own membership. Through this process, the group generated its own status by exclusion and students who may not even have considered themselves interested were converted into believers that they were intimidated by the "clique".

**So you wouldn't be a part of that clique?**

No, but I was very intimidated I guess by that clique for a long time. I felt my performing abilities weren't up to the par that a lot of them were and as a result, I felt inadequate.

**How did you feel inadequate?**

I felt inadequate as a musician. (P9:13/4)

This would be an appropriate time to remind ourselves that the quest for the status of "musician" drives the music school. It is the ultimate and almost exclusive quest among the members of the music school. Thus students who were intimidated by a

sub-group that could generate feelings of inadequacy in others would be seldom able to make the claim as a "musician" for themselves. This excerpt shows this clearly.

I think now you are able to feel around and to know who you really respect as a musician, there again I'm going back to my valuing a person as a musician ....and I think the people who I consider to be really good musicians are those who I respect more. And I think I am able to pick people out who I respect more for it.....do you know what I mean? (P5:27)

Students turn first to other students for assistance with academic tasks presented to them in the music school. Sometimes anyone in the class is sought out for help, sometimes students identify specific helpers. These "helpers" were of obvious significance to other students and they valued their assistance. Because the students entering music have a varied background, many students arrived having apparently completed some of the requirements, particularly theory and history. It is here that students turn to their colleagues for help more than other places. With secondary instruments<sup>16</sup>, those being the ones taken up in the music education classes, students often turn to their colleagues who major in those as principal instruments. The major applied instrument is the focal point of most of the competition in the music school and little assistance is sought or offered in respect to that.

This student turned to a friend "Joan" (name changed) for help. Notice the reference to "Joan" as the trombone, not as a person who plays the trombone but as the instrument itself. This formulation was frequently employed in the music school.

**Tell me about your first days here.**

I was really mind boggled when I got into theory and I didn't know a heck of a lot and after the first two classes I was lost but I'm glad I had Joan to help me along.

### **Who's Joan?**

My roommate, she's the trombone in 2nd year. At first I didn't much time here but after about three weeks I said <like I should spend more time> and I started spending more time and I started sitting around in the lounge and getting to know people. (M2-3:8)

At U of A, music education students report that they never sought help from the music majors but only from other music education majors.

**And most of them, half of over music students and half were education students.**

Well I never went to music students.

**And you would always talk to the education half.**

Yea (E5:25)

The one area that students did seek the advice of members of a normative reference groups with respect to their major performing instrument was with regarding particular demands made upon them by their teachers. In fact, an interesting grid of information was devised by the students. It appeared as if each student of one teacher lays the demands made upon him on the table. Then the demands made by students of other teachers are laid across this pattern at right angles and only the requirements that fall through the holes are perceived as "real

institutional demands". All other requirements are quirks of the individual teacher. This student explains.

She expects us to have an overall broad view of music, well not only music but literature and different arts too.

**Isn't that a bit overwhelming?**

Uhm...At first I used to think that she overdid it, like because if you talk to the students of the other teachers, they say well, our teacher doesn't give us that. You know, we don't have to go into the library and read about Robert Frost or...articles on how to be a better person, or....things like that. (M2-10:6/7)

This teacher grid of expectations is applied to performance demands as well. If one teacher demands a certain amount of performing which the like-instrument normative reference group seemingly judges to be out of line with the faculty norm, students find various ways to distance themselves from the requirement with the hope that in that scenario, the overall institutional requirement norm will apply.

Things like pushing them to do concerts, pushing them to do recitals, saying you have to learn this repertoire, and it has to be Chopin's Ballad in whatever, which is beyond their perception, like why not work on an easier piece that you can get under your fingers and do musically, play musically, and learn musically than try something grandiose. That was a big problem with one professor in specific with two girl friends who I spoke with. They said <I don't want to play that piece, I'm never going to have students who are going to play that piece. I can't understand it at this point in my life, at this point in my training; why is he making me do this? Why is he making me go up in front of the crowds, you know, 8 times a semester instead of twice a year like every other teacher?> (A11:23/4)

There is little doubt that professors that students deal with represent "referent others" in addition to the construct as "role-model" or "idol" discussed earlier. Whether the significance is positive or negative, students are obliged to interact with their professors and the difference in power between them because of the institutional situation, means simply that students must take account of their positions. They need not agree with them, and frequently do not, but they must take them into account. Warnings from other students tip off their colleagues about the interactional expectations with professors.

Yah in the beginning there was always the rumour ..... Oh boy your stuck with him oh my god and watch out. (A4:20)

In some situations, it is the tutorial leader that needs to be considered. The professor merely teaches the course but it is the tutorial leader that marks the papers and assigns the grades.

Yea. A lot of people do come to talk to me and I ask them about this. See the theory prof will tell you to do it one way and then the tutorial leaders will tell you they won't accept it and so you get 20 marks off because you did it the way the theory prof wanted it and they don't understand that.

**So what do you tell them.**

I tell them the way to survive in the first couple of years anyway is to find out what the theory prof wants but to find out really what the tutorial leader wants because they are the people who are marking you. And just follow what they want because in reality, you can actually go out on your own and write 20,000 little pieces if you want to in any style you want

but these are for marks and that's what counts. If you want to be allowed to progress, then you have to get the marks and that's all that matters. Around here anyway, I mean you're learning about theory so when you're on your own, you can really write what you want. So you just do exactly what the tutorial leader think should be done. (M2-11:12)

But even here, it is the student telling the student about the perceived reality of the situation.<sup>17</sup>

Considering the apparent focus on the applied teacher as a role model, as discussed earlier, it is obvious that this person is perceived as a "significant other" (Kuhn, 1964)<sup>18</sup> to many students in the music school community. This is not surprising in light of the fact that they more or less direct the studies that most centrally define "musician" and seem to control to a large extent and in many instances the conferring of that label. Furthermore, students spend a considerable amount of time alone with these applied teachers and can, as a result, interact more discretely, intensely and directly with them than with many others in the music school. Students claim that this significance is acknowledged and that other professors may be less "significant" because they do not belong to "the same group". This means that the professor is a string player (although teaching musicology) and the applied teacher is, usually, the same instrument as the student<sup>19</sup>. This MUN student explains.

**Would that .....would you say that they are more likely to approach their applied teacher than anybody else?**

In some cases yes. Because they are the person that sees you on .....every week and they know a little bit more about you personally than the others would. The others are .....they have you, more or less in the classroom situation where.....when that hour is up they really don't have a lot to do with you.



Especially if they are teaching some other area that you are not in, like if you were a string major and they are piano. They wouldn't have too much to do with you, so it has a lot to do with what group you are classified in. (P3:6/7)

In fact, because their applied teachers often are seen by the students to be in such a pivotal position to control most of the labelling possibilities through juries, performances and class concerts, students often confess to a "trust" of these people that goes beyond simple academic integrity. We have already reported examples where false praise was condemned by the students. Most students look towards their applied teachers for the only likely perceived "real" evaluation of their performing against the music school standard. Not infrequently did students report that this "trust" was uncomfortable. They imply that while it may be necessary, they fear that if the trust is abused that they have no other adequate substitute for the critical awarding of the "musician label.

No. If I trust somebody and I know them well enough to trust them, I mean that's all you have to go on. I mean you can go either way I could say that oh, everything that's she says is right because she's away and you know Ms. \*\*\*\*\*, my teacher is telling me that no she doesn't have a clue. But I mean I trust my teacher, so that's all I have to lean on really, that's a scary business. (P7:26/7)

Occasionally this theme of "scary" was employed to describe the relationship of distance rather than closeness to the applied teacher. While the relationship was no less "significant", it was one in which the teacher maintained the superior "musician" role exclusively for himself while allowing the student to grasp at the coat tails.

**Did you talk to your piano teacher about this?**

At Western?

Yea.

I didn't really talk to him, it was \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* and he wasn't very approachable on anything really because he was so far above me in playing it was scary and my piano teacher in Dryden was good but ... (A5:10)

Students acknowledge that their friends may deceive them through friendship and not offer a "true" critique. Other students will not offer a true critique for reasons associated with the "competition" of the situation and that the likely only candidate for "truth" seeking is the applied teacher. Teachers, who, as the "false praise" example shows, do not offer "truth", are well known generally throughout the population. Where students who have "false praise" teachers report comments from these teachers to other students in support of their claim on the "musician" label, it is often discounted because of this "community knowledge". Thus, while the teacher may be the only person to actually tell the student the "truth, it is within the jurisdiction of the music school community to tell the student whether the teacher's "truth" may be accepted. From Vancouver we have this confession.

Well that's why you have a whole idea of your own self image.  
Can kind of make or break you because yea you're aware of it.

**But where does it come from, like how do you do that.  
Are there people that you actually trust to tell you.**

Yea, there were certain people who I knew would tell me the truth.

**And who were they?**

One was my teacher.

**Your teacher would tell you the truth.**

Oh yea, there were no bones there. (V10:16)

In academic subjects like theory, students work for marks. As previously reported, the analysis of Becker, Geer and Hughes (1968) is fully compatible with this analysis. However, in the applied lesson, while marks may be important for academic progression, they are generally not considered the chief motivating factor. Students work for the "label" not the marks and marks alone cannot secure that "label". Thus students see the interaction with their applied instructors as very significant in terms of attracting a legitimate claim on the label of "musician" and they uniformly report that they "work for the applied instructor"<sup>20</sup>. This provides an arena where their claim on a "musician" identity can be publicly recognised or legitimated. This has its risks when the teacher is not supportive "by definition" and seeks a more "earned" approach to the status claim. Goffman (1959:66) writes, "And if we grudgingly allow certain symbols of status to establish a performer's right to a given treatment, we are always ready to pounce on chinks in his symbolic armour in order to discredit his pretensions". This report from a beginning student at UWO.

**Did you have a lesson already?**

I've had one. He said I had potential and sort of helped me out. Uhm....he didn't put me down right away. I thought him, a person who has come from another country to come over and teach, I thought he'd be very grand and he'd cut me down all the time but I think he's going to be patient. It's funny because I'd be practising my butt off for him just to make sure that he knows I can do something. I've never practised as hard for anybody! Just to show him. He makes you want to work. Just to show him. I've been practising an hour a day, an hour and

a half a day and I used to practice less than two hours a week. I never practised, except maybe an hour before my lesson. (M1-3:9)

Not all relationships grew in a positive way. Where applied teachers and students moved into conflict, the hold on the student was typically so great that the student told nobody in the music school. So much is apparently tied to the ability of the applied instructor to control the awarding of the "musician" label that dissonance in this relationship stayed secret. In this example from UWO the graduate explains her situation.

I was afraid to talk to anybody about my sax lessons because I was sure no else's went that way and no one really had the problem I had with, that I know of out of the [instrument] majors that stayed there. Uhm I really didn't talk to anybody about it, I would just go home and tell Mom that he was a jerk, and I hated it there but I knew I wanted to stay. (A7:12)

In fact, through these interviews this researcher has knowledge of events which might be legally defined as criminal behaviour on the part of a faculty member and his applied student and thus may not be reported here. But even these events were not officially reported by the student by her own admission. It is nevertheless important to point out that the "significance" of this relationship between applied teacher and student, either positive or negative, is of the utmost importance.

It may be constructive to compare the applied faculty member's "significance" with members of faculty generally. While UWO has a large faculty, the nature of the "closed-shop" makes it reasonably likely that with a professor's prominence in

the music school, that all the students might reasonably be expected to know them. This is not the case as this senior at UWO points out.

Is it, actually I really shouldn't say too much about the man because I don't know enough about him.....

**It's of no consequence**

I don't know if he does anything but I've been around this faculty for three years now and I don't know of anything that he does other than teach music education seminar.

**What about \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*?**

I don't know him.

**You don't know him at all?**

No

**How could you be here three years and not know him?**

I didn't have any courses with him. (M4-1:26/7)

Both of the men under discussion are established scholars in music education and teach many different courses in the faculty. It might be assumed that they would be known but without direct interaction in class they appear not to be of any "significance" to the students generally. There are other groups that might be expected to be of some relative significance but they appear to discount themselves from influence when they threaten the perceived importance of the "musician" label for the student. This seems to happen with some groups of students in the university residences. A senior at UWO reports.

**Any other comments from the people in residence about you being in music?**

No, people, you get the old....well "opera singer ah-ah-ah (sings)" you know. I never practised there. I always came down here to practice.

**With the normal people, you mean.**

Yea (M4-7:14)

Even by escaping "down here" music education students were confronted with yet another "significant other". This is the phantom performer in the next room. Students practice side by side in little rooms with thin walls and what goes on on either side of these walls is always a source of comparison<sup>21</sup> and a way of determining the music school standard. When the phantom player is performing well it tells students in the next practice room things of concern. This student explains.

**How do you know that?**

How do I know that. I was there. I see it, I felt it.

**How did you feel it?**

How, when your sitting there going over your, whatever it is and somebody's next door just whipping away at their Chopin, the Ballad or whatever (A6:13)

Music education students value the views of many "others". While the applied teacher appears to be one of the most "significant", peers and friends amongst peers play an important part as well. The students band together into various "cliques"

which appear to develop their own power to make decisions which students in the clique apparently blindly follow. Even such decisions as concert attendance can be shown to be determined by the "clique". Some of these groups have a regular membership and gain their status by excluding others who might otherwise be eligible. Other groups are temporally ad hoc such as the membership of the main lounge gathering. This group nevertheless provides significant information and comment on the music school society and its membership status does not seem to be an issue for the type of information sought and accepted by the students. Certain other individuals are important, particularly conductors of ensembles for they too control the conferring of the "musician" label.

Students develop various strategies while engaged in presenting their social "Front" (Goffman, 1959:32) to Others. They take account of Others and their own "Self arises from the social experience of interacting with Others" (Hargreaves, 1975:7). Not all Others appear to be equally important for the construction of a musician identity. In an attempt to be socially conferred with the label of "musician" the students seek out "significant others" (Kuhn, 1964) such as their applied teachers and certain peers. Certain groups of individuals appear to be significant for the same purpose and these "reference groups" (Kelley, 1952) have been described as "normative", "comparative" and "negative". In all cases, the social construction of a musician identity appears to depend on the "reactions" by these referent Others to the claim made by the students.

## Notes for Chapter Eight

1. Kingsbury (1984:113) does not identify these as "reference groups" since he is primarily concerned with the "music" rather than the "musician".
2. These cliques have a strong "structural" boundary in that students are eligible for membership only when they have the same major performing instrument as the clique. But it must be made clear, as in the case of the Kingsbury student, that this criterion alone does not ensure membership.
3. This, of course, is consistent with the position taken here from Cohen (1985) where he rightly points out that these boundaries are "symbolic" and are often "invisible" to some outsiders.
4. "Broadway" is well known to Canadian music students, the "West End" is not nearly as strong as a conceptual construct. Although they are aware of the many musicals playing in London currently, particularly with the apparent preeminence of Lloyd-Webber, the idea of another "Broadway" does not seem to surface.
5. Canada has a fairly strong tradition of competitive music festivals usually operated by one of the community service clubs like Kiwanis or Rotary Clubs.
6. Not always however and we are reminded of the incident in Vancouver where the student won the orchestral seat over his teacher.
7. The Canadian equivalent of the BBC.
8. We are reminded of Kingsbury's comment regarding the reciprocal nature of the status drawn by students and teachers in the performing area. (1984:111)
9. Role models are seen by students to be a form of definitionally stable musician to which the student can identify. Thus if a student sees a person who seems to embody the sort of musician that the student views himself as being or becoming, then this person can serve as a model, not as a person, but as a defined sort of musician. "Idol" seems to be much the same in usage except more severe and perhaps more definitionally removed from the student's perception of his own identity. Of course, by association, some students say they wish to be like this particular "idol" because of things associated with the person rather than the person himself. If performer "A", who sings at the Royal Opera, is viewed as an idol it is usually because the student would like to sing at the Royal Opera. In this way, "idols", and "role models" are viewed as social categories with specific properties. The students align themselves with the properties rather than the people.



10. It seems to be operationalized as if the "groups" existed and the students move into these groups. Each student gives the same impression and one can only conclude that these groups do not exist except in the vague impressions of those trying to organize themselves. Then, as the various actors come together, even with such structurally organized instances as classes, the groups seem to fuse. This notion of "fusing" seems to be the point when the group appears recognizable to the members collectively.

11. Kelly (1952) reported in Hargreaves (1975:13).

12. Some students, perhaps somewhat like this student, may see this particular group as a "negative reference group" (Kelly (1952) to which he may not be seeking membership because he sees the purposes and ideals of the group as different than his own but nevertheless take account of the group.

13. These "typifications" about certain instrumental categories have been the focus of other investigations such as Lipton, Jack (1987) "Stereotypes concerning Musicians within Symphony orchestras" Journal of Psychology. 121/1 January, p.85-93. In this research, trumpeters (as brass players) were indeed shown to be different than string players.

14. Interview transcript, A8, p.10. Most people did not find the practice situation for organists at all funny at UWO. The fact that one of the most recent former Deans of the Faculty was an organist was generally considered to be the cause of the abundant practice facilities for the few organ majors in the music school.

15. see Merton (1949) discussed in Hargreaves (1975) p.33-40

16. Students typically have one "major" performing instrument. Students taking the music education stream also are required to perform (minimally) on several of the other band and/or orchestral instruments and usually get group classes in these other instruments. They are referred to as "secondary" instruments. "Minor" instruments can be either "secondary" instruments or a sort of "extra" major instrument. "Identity" is usually only constructed with reference to the "major" instrument and the private instruction associated with it.

17. This excerpt also amply demonstrates the theory of academia that is put forward by Becker, Geer and Hughes (1968) in Making the Grade. It is for this very reason that the "musician" part of this community appears to function independently of the academic side of school. This is curious situation in light of the fact that music-making is an academic matter in the music school.

18. Kuhn (1964) in Hargreaves (1975:8) lists the four requirements which define a "significant other".

19. There is often some dissatisfaction when students must study with teachers who are not performers on the same instrument. In some instances (e.g. at MUN) there is a cello teacher but he also teaches bass. Even singers get into this excitement sometimes

when the claim periodically surfaces that sopranos need sopranos as teachers, tenors need tenors etc. In practice, students seem to study with like-instrument playing instructors whenever possible.

20. What is implied here is that the student actually "works" for the teacher rather than for the sake of the music or some other intrinsic reasons. This is, of course, the same notion that Goffman (1959:32) calls "Front". He writes, "Front then, is the expressive equipment of a standard kind of intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance". In our case, the performance is not just the musical performance but the social performance in the presence of the teacher. Not only does this typically include the actual musical performance but also many strategies to ensure that the musical performance is received positively. Such strategies include several "music performance rituals" such as wetting lips for brass player in order to give "hints" as to the possible reasons things may not go well. Much "talk" is included as a precursor to musical performance. These many strategies associated with "talk" have to do with letting the teacher know that "I have practised 18 hours a day" or a frequently employed device I call "diversion". Students, upon being requested to perform a piece, will find one small section and point this out to the teacher as being particularly difficult. (It usually is!) But the student hopes typically to "divert" the attention off of the remainder of the performance so that the teacher can concentrate on helping the student with this "agreed upon" difficulty.

21. a comparative reference group of one. (Kelley, 1952)

## Ongoing Validation of Identity

### Support<sup>1</sup> in the "musician" role

The analysis has shown that music education students take account of Others in the formation of their identity as a "musician". Although each student negotiates individually with Others, as a group, many of the music education students appear to see their applied instructors as a "comparative" reference group (Kelley (1952) as a "role model" or "idol". This relationship of student and teacher here is more than just comparing one's performance skills and abilities but more representative of a "striving" model. Dewey (1922:119) wrote, "It is absurd to ask what induces a man to activity, generally speaking. He is an active being and that is all there is to be said on that score". Perinbanayagam (1985:206) points out that Dewey's assertion does not answer the question of why certain lines of activity and programmes of action are systematically pursued over a period of time by an individual. Becker (1960) as has been noted before asserts that an Actor selects committed action because of "side-bets" previously made either by himself or by Others for him. Perinbanayagam (1985:208) disagrees with this "trapped" explanation for habitual acts<sup>2</sup>. He suggests that there is "no quality of an imperative or necessary relationship between acts and motives". Furthermore he goes on to explain how in the case of an athlete, whatever may have

brought him to the field as a competitor may be derived from a variety of motives but once the starting pistol has sounded, the action of the athlete is "unsupported by an immediate vocabulary of motives". Music students are engulfed with music-making activities in the music school and, like the athlete after the starting pistol, these social acts continue without an apparent motive. And it is important to remind the reader that "music is not an a priori phenomenon of the nature world" (Kingsbury (1988:178). It is therefore a continuing socially defined phenomenon which takes place in its music school form with a sort of social inertia, guided by these "idols" and "role models" and what they represent symbolically.

Members of faculty also serve collectively as a "normative reference group (Kelley, 1952) to students in that student "conforms to the group's norms". It is obvious that while students cannot "join" the group officially, symbolically many students do join this reference group. They appear to adopt the values and evaluate themselves in the terms of this group (Hargreaves, 1985:13). There are instances, for example, where certain students in the music school are "invited" to perform with faculty members, usually in ensembles<sup>3</sup>.

Various groups of students provide the music education students with a variety of referent stations in the music school. It has been noted that for some music education students, the performance majors often serve as a "negative reference group".

We turn now to the way in which the construction of an identity as a musician is affected by these referent Others and how students garner "support" from these Others for their claim as a "musician".

Others in the music school contribute towards the socially defined determination of the situation and the label "musician". They seem frequently to be the same persons that either provide or in certain cases withhold support. When a certain student gravitates to a group of other students, he does so because the group usually is like-minded about a particular aspect of the music school. Thus while the group may influence the individual by providing a "reference" position, the group also is likely to provide a positive societal reaction to the individual for holding the general position that the group espouses in the first instance<sup>4</sup>. Students usually talked about "things in common" when they discussed these group associations.

**You didn't talk to anybody?**

Not really. I was rather, I was outside the stream. I met some very good people individually and of course tended to gravitate to musicians who had the same attitude and interestingly I tended to hang out with jazz people more than anything. You seem to have things in common. (A8:6)

It may be worth reviewing the position that, while students have various academic majors including music education, what they seem to seek support for is their claim as a "musician". Remembering that the "performance major" stream appears to be superior by definition, and that students act toward their perception of such a definitionally superior status, it may be useful to look again at the general visibility that the performance academic stream has in the music school. The various instrumental applied majors are obvious. Students walk around the building carrying their instrument much of the day<sup>5</sup>. They do not, however, carry any signs of their academic programme, with the exception of the occasional textbook. However, in the

main lounge, it was an unusual observation to see texts for any courses except the most common ones such as theory or musicology. Thus students typically did not perceive the education stream as an identifiable, that is, visible group.

**So all you who were not worthy enough to be in anything else now are this education pool. Are you an identifiable group?**

I don't think so. I don't think its identifiable at all. I wouldn't be able to.....Some people you can pick out their majors if they're carrying their instrument around or vocal majors like to walk around humming.

**I thought you were an education major?**

Well I'm talking about...well in education you still have your major instrument. So you can peg people as to what their instrument is, but their degree programm, besides performance, knowing that they're in performance, some people who were in theory and comp. I had no idea they were in theory and comp. until they graduated. (A11:28/9)

The apparent prominence of the performing "musician" in the music school is clear. Because the role of "musician" has various "status" levels, the students group themselves in a way for which they perceive as gaining support according to the status that they claim within the music school. This appears to be one of the major criterion used to assess the apparent significance of a "reference group". Music education students perceive those claiming a higher status musician unable to substantiate such a claim by reference only to those students perceived to be below them on this ladder of musician statuses<sup>6</sup>. The exception seems to be by negative comparison where they can distance themselves<sup>7</sup> from the standards or positions of those occupying the lower rungs in the music school<sup>8</sup>. It is not surprising to hear music education students report

that, as a result, they tend to organize themselves into groups according to perceived ability. There have been examples of this reported earlier in the section on "reference groups" but further evidence is easily found.

**Do these quitters or leavers identify themselves in a group.**

Yea sometimes, we tend to group according to ability I guess.

**Any other ways they group themselves?**

By euchre ability too.

**Yea that's an interesting group.**

They also group from home like people from Toronto or from band camps and stuff.

**And then there's the Singers.**

Yea well that's a clique unto itself. That was a little joke between Larry and me that we weren't going to be able to talk to anybody once we got into Singers. (M3-7:7)

The same characteristics can be found in seeking a positive societal reaction from the peers in performance. To maintain the "status" claim that they have as superior, the performance students are perceived by music education students as clinging together as both a comparative and a normative reference group which supplies a way to judge one's own position and this sense of "support", i.e. positive societal reaction using the groups values and norms (Hargreaves, 1985).

The performance majors have their little clique and generalists have their own little clique and even within the performance majors they are pegging who is better than the other guy, I'm not into that. (V6:20)

Instrumental specialties also frequently group together for mutual "support" while at the same time providing this "comparative" opportunity. At UWO the pianists are seen by the students as socially controlling the second floor and the adjoining lounge.

**Is that important?**

I don't know, there seems to be sort of a differentiation between music education people and performance people.

**What's different?**

I don't know the whole life on second floor. Piano majors they are always up there practising and that and you get to know each other more socially than a lot of the music education people because ... (M4-9:44)

Because the individuals of these comparative reference groups are apparently also simultaneously in competition with each other, the group provides support more in a fashion that ensures a given starting point from which to launch the competition. Thus by belonging to the clique that has a certain "status", you may become eligible to attempt to climb to a position that may be inaccessible from groups holding a lower original status position. Thus the group provides "support" but not to the exclusion of the individual who still seeks other forms of "support" to elevate his own status further.

There is evidence which suggests that where students do not have a prior claim to a perceived relatively high status as a "musician" that they wish for an academic as well as social assessment model that is driven by "improvement" rather than



"performance". But the music school seems generally not to support the "improvement" model for either academic assessment nor for the socially constructed version of a "musician". The general view seems to be that assessment should be based on "performance". This view is consistent with the "outside" view although it is important to remember that the performance standard is virtually established by the music school alone<sup>9</sup>. This example demonstrates this point.

Well hopefully that if the marking system is the way that is, I think, the most beneficial to the student then obviously that person has worked. What the teacher considers harder than I have and has improved more than I have whether they started as a lower level doesn't make any difference. If they've gone farther in the teacher's eyes then they deserve a better mark.

**So it's all improvement then?**

I think that's what it should be. That's not what other people think though. (A3:28)

The music school as a whole provides support gaining opportunities to the students through the various music-making activities. Recalling Kadushin's (1969) comment that the music school was also a performers' arena, it is understandable to hear students fear the withdrawal of these opportunities at UWO when they move to the Faculty of Education.

**Who had given you the idea that this was a withdrawal from music?**

Oh the students came back and would say do whatever you can to keep doing musical things because you don't do it in class like you do at the faculty of music. (A5:33)

Instrumentally, students are banded together into like-instrument groups<sup>10</sup> which provide a certain form of limited support as well. Like the academic major banding, the instrumentalists must individually compete for the same opportunities against others in the group to attract status. Thus support is limited to general items such as providing a group repertoire list which students use to evaluate their progress and in smaller institutions where all the of the students of one instrument study with the same teacher, the instrument group provides a form of support that counters the professor's. The perception of repertoire as a status indicator was a particularly interesting one to observe. Students would quite often methodically place certain pieces of music on the top of their books to ensure that the particular piece was obvious to others. During some informal conversation with students in the lounge at UWO, this researcher questioned a few students as to the nature of the relationship the students had to these "top of the pile pieces". Occasionally one discovered that students, both performance majors and music education majors alike, would be "playing through it" or "just checking it out". This usually meant that they could not actually play the piece nor were they actively trying to learn the piece. It was merely a symbol of their sought after status<sup>11</sup>. By revealing certain repertoire, they might suggest to others that they were actually playing at this often higher than reasonable level. In fairness to the music education majors, this ploy was more typically seen in performance majors, who one might suspect, have a stronger perceived need to demonstrate ability to handle these difficult pieces. The final point is, however, that students generally understood which pieces were where on the socially agreed hierarchy of repertoire for any given instrument.

Also the instrumental group was perceived as required to tend to the image of their own instrument. Students often reported that they were seen as, for example, a "pianist" and that this designation had certain social implications as to how they were viewed by the students in the music school. This organist's report is a case in point.

**I thought they were "unworthies" over there.**

Yea they are, sort of. I was considered an organist which is maybe a worse stereotype, I'm not sure which one's the less...(A8:6)

The members of faculty who interact with these individuals have been shown to be the most likely candidates for "significant other". The most reasonable explanation for this is that, where most other opportunities to demonstrate one's right to claim the label "musician" are limited to some extent, every student gets a private lesson where the apparent expectation is to make exactly this claim. Thus the teacher of the applied instrument is seen as the most able person to supply support, both normatively and comparatively<sup>12</sup> for the claim as a "musician". Students often change teachers who appear to deny them their claim. Kingsbury (1984:139) writes that "a student's commitment to soloistic technique is in effect a commitment to a relationship with an individual mentor" and somewhat earlier where he writes (1984:115) that "it should be clear that the social organization of conservatory cliques is often closely linked to the persona of the teacher". Thus where a change is not possible as in the smaller institutions, a crisis in identity management often occurs<sup>13</sup>. This will be discussed more fully in the section to follow on the "failed musician". But for the moment, it is useful to demonstrate that where such a change occurs, it is usually because the

student perceives that he is not receiving the kind of normative support which results in a legitimate claim on the label "musician".

**Do you have any recollection why you didn't have any confidence at it?**

Well as I told you, I changed piano teachers in grade 13 and the teacher I had before that not really much for bolstering confidence, like it was always <<oh those scales weren't quite fast enough>> <<oh you haven't memorized that yet>> you know <<when are you ever going to learn how to pedal properly>> that sort of thing. It wasn't a positive approach. (A2:2)

In addition to positive normative reference within the studio setting, certain applied instructors solicit "gigs" for students, thereby providing further indication of support.

**Did this person do much performing?**

Yes.

**Is that important?**

Not so much for me but for the performance majors in the studio he was very helpful in getting performance opportunities for those who wanted it. (A2:11)

Many music education students reported a close and helpful atmosphere between themselves and the other students with much moral support and a lack of overt competition. While this is certainly not everyone's idea, there are many who do appear to interact with the others in the music school in this way. As this "friendship"

develops, however, it will become increasingly obvious that the "friends" serve as a protection network for the students to guard them from attack from those who would threaten their "musician" label claim.

To begin the development here, we turn first to students who view the atmosphere as generally providing positive normative reference.

Although I have to say of the music faculty, there is a very good, there was always....in the education department....very good moral support. I can't say that I ever felt any competition in any big way. Healthy competition but not in any bad way at all. It was very supportive. (A10:19)

Students use their construct of "support" and "moral support" with a very self-evident meaning. However, when this construct is unpacked sociologically, it is clear that there are more transparent terms in the sociologist's tool bag. Thus it is apparent that "support" is seen as providing a "positive societal reaction" by a group which shares values and norms (Hargreaves, 1985:13), that is, a normative reference group. This is important because it appears that this same group usually also provides students with a comparative reference group simultaneously, on the one hand providing students with a positive reaction and on the other hand by providing a comparison group against which students were free to negotiate their relative claim as a musician. Nevertheless, students often reported impressions of growing deep friendships with the other students. This was typically attributed to like-mindedness and a common bond against common foes.

And I found after getting to know the music people they're very sincere. A lot of them are afraid to go out and make friends in different areas But they're very sincere and they're probably the best friends that I've ever had because there's something about them, I can't pin point it, there's an understanding in their hearts, there's a compassion for people yet there's an artistic understanding, if that makes any sort of sense whatever? I've never ever tried to put words to it. My boyfriend has tons of friends and we've made a lot of friends in music. (A11:15)

Typically the students make school friends with other students who play the same instrument. This is consistent with the banding arrangements seen in the section on "reference groups". These students are knowledgeable about the same things that others in the group know and can provide the kind of understanding and support at the personal level while at the same time be in competition with each other for various status gaining opportunities.

Well most of my friends are vocal majors. When I say friends I mean most of the people that I consider my close friends. I would say most of them are vocal majors and my best friend is a piano major and another one of my close friends is a piano major but those people are interested in singing and that's not because I don't like people that play string instruments it's just because I've come in contact mostly with those people and you become friends with the people you see the most. (A3:25)

In fact, when the students leave the music school at UWO to go to the Faculty of Education, the friendship network remains one of their major concerns. This group has been the major source of reaction against which students are able to construct their musician identity and many of the students commented that a retention of the

friendship group was a priority and that they saw it threatened by the progression to the Faculty of Education, a form of status passage crisis.

**So the group is your year then?**

Yea, that's basically what I'm saying. The group is your year. We still have it here. We come here out of Western and you go to the cafeteria and of course, there's one table and there's all the Western grads sitting at the table. So my goal this year is to keep friends with these people, because they're important to me, they're definitely important to me, but I want to meet new people from different areas. (A11:9)

Although the students interact with each other as though they share a similar definition of the situation, most students are unaware of the importance attributed to the group by this student.

So that separated me as well, you know, that my roommates were up the hill. When I sat in class it was a little harder, I sort of latched on to 2 girls who were in music and made friends with them and they weren't part of any group. There were sort of outsiders on their own. I made friends with them and stuck with them and slowly got to know more people and people sort of said <<that's so and so>>. I therefore had the protection of being able to sit with somebody in a class if I wanted or eat lunch with somebody. So I covered my end that way. I didn't think of it like that when I was there. (A11:10/11)

The protection that the students gain from this friendship group is from attacks against them as "musicians". This takes place in various public performing arenas within the music school. Student masterclasses, recitals, rehearsals and ensemble performances as well as any class playing open to others. This student explains.

**Did you ever hear a comment outside the class?**

About the class? I've only ever heard good things about the vocal class. At least about my vocal class. I think there's gossip about masterclasses where you perform in front of your teacher's students. A lot of that does go on, a lot of faculty gossip.

**What kind of gossip?**

Well, I don't know. I noticed it the most among the singers and I'm not a singer, thank goodness. They're catty, they're catty. You know just very competitive. (A9:15)

But despite this apparent lack of positive societal reaction, the students, face to face at least, tend to temper their criticisms and offer what may be taken as constructive positive criticism. This example is typical.

**Did anybody ever comment about any of the performances?**

Yea, we always did after the person sang.

**Do you think that was why they were less than happy to do it?**

I don't know. People were pretty good about it. Like people were pretty positive even though somebody sang just awful people were still pretty positive. They'd try to find positive things, I mean, we weren't commenting on < <that note was out of tune> > or stuff like that cause obviously not everyone has a beautiful voice, but if they stood up straight or had their piece memorized, you know, you made some comment about that. (A9:14/5)

In fact, friends lied to each other and they knew it and admitted it. But that appears to have been considerably more acceptable than a face to face confrontation



where the "musician" may be seriously threatened. It must be stressed that students are not seeking a sort of "yes/no" claim. The process of seeking and validating their identity is substantially more complex than a simple "yes" or "no". In fact, we have seen many of these negotiated models presented and the "rung on a ladder" model is a clear indication that, while seen as normative, it is also constrained by definitional criteria. The whole notion of a "musician" as "good, bad, acceptable" or other more technically refined definitions is tentative and thus the apparent cause for the continued claim and seeking of validation for the claim as a "musician". So, for the purposes of "face", the students were prepared to allow a latitude for assessment, that in private, may not withstand the music school's censure. This student explains.

**You do a lot of this evaluating each other don't you.**

Yea

**Do you like that?**

Sometimes yes, sometimes not.

**When not.**

When there is somebody who's up there obviously trying but not getting across what they want to. Like it's really hard to get up and sing in front of people and some people can't do it and they would be so nervous and they'd be trying so hard. And you want to give constructive criticism.

**So you do lie sometimes.**

Yea, I guess a little. (M2-9:17)

The notion of students acting as "critics" is one that they themselves grow in time not to particularly like. But they apparently continue to play this part, not because

they wish to criticise the performer but because they are able themselves, through this activity, to impress their peers with their "knowledge" about things musical<sup>14</sup>. Kingsbury (1984:60-62) discussed the opposite of this notion when he writes about the "unmusical" person who offers to hear a performance without critical comment. Kingsbury suggests that this posture, as a "non-musician", is important and is one that demonstrates that the person is really saying that their own knowledge of music is weak and that any such critique could place them in a situation where they might be perceived by others as "embarrassingly ignorant and might be liable to some form of ridicule". Thus music students appear to adopt the opposite strategy specifically to demonstrate that they do have an abundance of knowledge about music and by making such critical comments they appear to be in command of this knowledge and gain points from this social action. This provides a form of validation for their own claim to the "musician" label<sup>15</sup> and whatever the result for the performer is generally not considered to be of any concern. This graduate recalls her behaviour.

A lot of people go to listen, and a lot of people go to criticize.  
You always have the critics there.

**How would they criticize?**

I didn't like her interpretation of that, she was you know a singer, or to be really flat or whatever. Just negative. See the way she is standing on stage or poise is bad, her different things like that.

**Why do you suppose they feel obliged to do that?**

Insecure.

**Did you that too?**

Probably. Yes. Probably more than I like to admit, but

**So you don't think it is necessarily a good trait?**

No, definitely not. (A6:14)

While status may be garnered for performing a solo recital, none seems to be available for attending these concerts. In fact, music students do not attend many concerts at all except in those institutions like MUN where concert attendance is made mandatory by linking grades to attendance at concerts to the applied instrument mark. Students usually go to support friends or to check out the competition on their own instrument. Some go to hear works that they feel they ought to hear, but not many. This student explains.

Well no not totally unselective. The voice recitals I don't go to very often like class recitals but if it is a solo recital I'll tend to go because they are covering more, you know, bigger repertoire rather than your little Faure songs that I've accompanied for four years and I know them all really well anyway. You know like I say I have some friends that are performing you go and you listen to them.

**Is that a typical pattern? People hear their friends like if I'm gonna go to a concert I go to my friend's concert?**

Yea there is that sort of commradery you come to my recital I'll come to yours because everybody knows we're desperate for audiences<sup>16</sup>. (M4-9:49)

The audience for students recitals was of some concern to Kingsbury as well. He writes (1984:215),

Other things being equal, the audience tended to be larger at recitals by students who were reputed in the conservatory to be leading performers, and at recitals where the "standard" soloistic repertoire would be performed: piano, cello, violin, or voice recitals drew more listeners than trumpet, bassoon, tuba, or percussion recitals.

This student explains some of the criteria used to determine if one would attend a recital.

**How many people go?**

Depend on the concert. If it's...and the person. If it's somebody who's really known to be a good performer, then it mostly full but if it's just a concert, then maybe there'll be like 10 people in the room.

**What "just" a concert?**

That's somebody who's not really know Like you've never heard them before and they don't have a reputation as a good performer or a bad performer whatever.

**So their five friends will go and that's it.**

Yea and their mom and dad will come from home. Little sister and dog and their teacher will go. (M2-11:16)

And as has been pointed out before, the criteria are often judged by the normative group in any case. If the group decides the recital is worth attending, for whatever reasons, then the members will attend. The reciprocal is also true.

Uhm.....not really. I know in a lot of cases they'll if I have somebody to go with, I'll go but I don't do that. I usually go just to see what the performer's like or.....

**I find that strange, because I never see any music student alone.**

No it's not that, it's....they'll say well nobody else is going, why should I go. If so and so is not going, then I won't go either.

**Does that mean you have to convince certain people to go.**

Yea, like usually they'll announce in theory class, well there's such and such a concert coming up on Friday and then somebody will say <are you going> and I usually say I'll go. Usually they'll just go if there is somebody else to go with. I sort of found that. (M2-10:6)

At the same time, students confess to the other perception that, in addition to providing positive normative reference, there is a hidden agenda. That is to check out the competition particularly for like-instrument playing peers<sup>17</sup>. This second year UWO student confesses.

**And you all applaud and make lots of noise.**

Yea because you're out there for support too. Like from each other. Like when there is another voice recital from another teacher, we all go and support there.

**Do you go to support them or really to cut them up cause they're doing things different than your teacher.**

Well I guess that's true. That's human nature to say yea I've done that piece better or They're not as good as I thought they'd be or ...(M2-3:16)

Faculty members on the other hand, who do not attend the recitals are viewed as "non-supportive", that is not fulfilling their perceived obligation to provide positive societal reaction to one's claim as a "musician". This criticism of faculty is most

hurled at the music history and theory professors who are obvious by their absence at student recitals. This report from a senior at UWO.

**Okay, but don't musicologists have any necessity to share that?**

Well they don't seem to tell us about it, I mean music history people don't ever go to any concerts that I can see. You know

**Does that bother you?**

Yea it does.

**Why?**

Because they're not supporting their school and I think they should be supporting in all aspects of. You know they have there specialty but we had students still, even if we did a specialty are still developing. I think they should give us support in a well rounded development rather than just hanging out with music history students. (M4-1:22/3)

Students get role support from their parents in mixed proportions<sup>18</sup>. Some are lucky enough to have parents that are really keen on their children pursuing music while others are not. The students themselves took solace in the fact that many parents were mostly content that their child was attending university. This example demonstrates this lack of support. While in this context this repeated excerpt shows us more specifically how the parents may be perceived as a negative reference group (Kelley, 1952). Students are aware of the values and norms which many of their parents seem to share and reject these values by not evaluating himself by these terms.

**So who talked you into university?**

My parents. They're not really into music and they don't see it as having much of a future even though they are supportive, like paying for lessons but they didn't think that music would be something to earn a living by, just to go to university to get a degree is something even if it is in music.

**So they weren't too impressed. Like on a scale of delight, it would be a 1.**

Well maybe a 2. (M1-7:4)

Some students gain their own perceived acceptable level of positive societal reaction from outside the music school. People on the street acknowledge these students as part of a recognized group. This societal reaction is not dissimilar to the status attributed by affiliation. This student recounts her experience.

I know I don't like being competitive it's in my nature but I do enjoy competing like with the ensemble .....not as a solo artist at all, and I had a real sense of fulfilment ..... it's beyond anything I've ever done.

**Is your fulfilment, Well what is your fulfilment?**

Well it's a sense of belonging, part of it.

**Belonging to what?**

Well to a recognized ensemble .... to something that people like when you say hah she plays in this band you know later on it turns out they see you somewhere in town, I come from a small town. Somebody sees you in town and say oh I recognize you, you played last Wednesday night or whatever it was and I really enjoyed that. The recognition ..... I'm not a super player but ... (M3-1:2)

Role support is derived from both individuals and groups in the music school. The applied teacher appears to be a major contributor to this and peer groups of like-instrument playing colleagues seem to be next in line. Role support is seen as "expected" inside the music school and those "officials" of the system, the members of faculty, who do not provide this support are singled out as not fulfilling their role to provide this positive societal reaction and thus contribute to a successful claim on the "musician" label. Parents and members of the outside community-at-large sometimes play an important part in providing this positive societal reaction to certain students while other students seem to treat the group values and norms of their parents as a negative force and other students simply lack opportunity to garner positive societal reaction to themselves as musicians outside the music school.

As a next step, this analysis attempts to penetrate the "actor's" world to discover how each student "negotiates" his claim on the label "musician" and what social strategies he uses to do this.

## The Pursuit of Musician Identity: Strategies in Negotiation

Negotiating with others in the music school in order to be perceived as a "musician" is, without a doubt, one of the most theatrical events in all of human behaviour. Because the "musician" presents himself as such on a stage as a normal situation, what passes for "normal" in everyday negotiations succumbs to the same staged display of self. Although Goffman (1959) has been criticized for a too theatrical analysis of man's behaviour, his critics have never applied his theory to



the successful negotiation of the social construct "musician" inside the music school.

Goffman (1959:28) writes,

When an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them. They are asked to believe that the character they see actually possesses the attributes he appears to possess, that the task he performs will have the consequences that are implicitly claimed for it, and that, in general, matters are what they appear to be.

In fact, Goffman (1959:41) writes specifically about the abundance of theatre required in the "musician" role.

the roles of prizefighters, surgeons, violinists, and policeman are cases in point. These activities allow for so much dramatic self-expression that exemplary practitioners - whether real or fictional - become famous and are given a special place in the commercially organized fantasies of the nation.

Goffman (1959:32) continues by suggesting that the "performance" by an individual is defined by a term he refers to as "front".

Front, then, is the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance.

"Front" is further divided into two major sections which he calls the "setting" and the "personal front". The latter being composed of "appearance" and "manner". It to each of these in turn that the discussion now proceeds.

The general "setting" for negotiation is inescapable. The music education students perceive themselves confined to a closed symbolic community (Cohen, 1985) and find themselves confronting their musical peers and tutors regularly. It has already been shown that when these students are outside this "setting" they present themselves differently. Thus a typical introduction to each other as "I'm a pianist" serves on the one hand to remind others and self of the "musician" label sought but at the same time, generates collectively the "setting" where that self-labelling approach to others comes to be accepted and expected. When these students are physically outside the music school, "up the hill" as reported at UWO, their introductions become more academically defined as a "music major" in the same way as the English major would report his status on campus. The physical "setting" consists of specific music-making rooms where choirs and bands rehearse and performance theatres and recital halls where performance events occur. Usually, these rooms which in an academic sense are just classrooms, become known as the "band room", the "choral room" and the "stage".

At UWO, for example, when the new music building was constructed on campus, it was designed ultimately<sup>19</sup> as an annex to another academic college on campus. Thus the "special" requirement space was added to normal classroom space. This results in having the music-making areas confined to a space removed from the academic areas of the music school. At MUN, where there is a new music school building the design stipulated the exact same physical requirements as occurred by default at UWO. The upper floor houses academic classrooms, the library and faculty offices. The lower floor has a student common room, practice rooms, the recital hall, band and choral rooms. Thus all the music-making spaces for students are confined to a specific area in which the students ultimately spend most of their time.<sup>20</sup>

It would be completely incongruent to expect a television ad to be made in this "setting" for legal advice or medical care. The "setting" is specific to music-making and plays an important part in the negotiation for one's right to be in that space.

The most controlled negotiation "front" is appearance. The role of "musician" occasionally necessitates costumes which would not otherwise seem appropriate in everyday situations. Students who are performing recitals alone or in certain groups frequently arrive in tuxedos or concert dresses well outside the time<sup>21</sup> which might otherwise be appropriate for this dress code. While in certain circumstances this is convenient, it is nevertheless more often than not opportunistic, a strategy to provide clues to others of the impending display of the musician claim. Again here we see the complexity of the claim. In this case it seems apparent that the "performer" component of the musician claim is being emphasised but even that is not without confusion. Each of these strategies serves to remind the referent others that an impending "act" as a musician is about to occur. Thus one must be as one acts. If a student is about "to music" then, obviously, he must have a claim on some sort of musician identity.

Even on a more normal note, it is not uncommon to see particularly singers dressing in exorbitant costumes with long flowing scarves around their necks. These "props" are then flung about with great theatre upon departure to indicate a time to practice or go for some other appointment such as class or lesson. These strategies as well point toward the show of "musician" activity. And of course, various T-shirts show affiliation to the Faculty of Music Singers or to the music school itself and in

some cases other institutions where the students have taken special summer schools or have participated in "outside" ensembles.

Props are, of course, not limited to costume. Students carry instrument cases and music around during much of the day. Certain music, as has been explained before, is often displayed conveniently on the top of the pile. This strategy is also designed apparently to enhance status. That is, the difficult pieces which everyone recognizes, are always overtly displayed. In fact, as stated earlier, students have been known to carry pieces which they cannot play at all solely for the "effect" and status that they bring to the bearer. Observers gain "points" by demonstrating they have the required "knowledge" to recognize that these particular pieces are worthy of elevated status to the engaged student. Oboe players who are serious would be expected to make or at least adjust their own reeds. Although few make reeds and most do learn to adjust them, reed making equipment is put on display to show that the oboist has achieved a particular status. Even the make and model of instrument plays an important part in negotiating one's status as, for example, a clarinetist or trumpet player. Certain brand names and models become fashionable in the music schools and students who have these brands and models or even better switch "up" to them gain status. Even accessories such as particular "mouth-pieces" can be used as "props" in this way. There is ample opportunity to display these instruments in the ensembles in which students are required to participate. "Bumper stickers" or decals are collected by many students from previous ensembles or summer band camps or workshops and stuck to their instrument cases. Students carry conducting batons to choral class although many do not use them. The inside of student lockers are often covered with posters about performances by themselves or by friends.

"Manner" is more elaborate to explain. There have been reports presented in this document of social action which might be viewed from the outside and seen too by the students as bizarre. People making theatrical entrances to class and singing to themselves in public are everyday occurrences. While they seem to be limited to a few students, the events are accepted as part of the normal ethos of the music school. Students are over-charged emotionally about music-making events. They succumb to the role of "critic" to be able to present their own "front" to others as knowledgeable. They do have an obligation to audition for chairs in the ensembles and to give recitals and sing solos in class.

It is not to be taken that the students become cynical about these requirements, apparent or real. This is simply the way life proceeds in this community. These are some of the ways which all the students typically conduct themselves and while from a sociological perspective can be shown to be the "fronts" that the students choose to use, they are nevertheless the normal patterns of social action in the music school. They are sincere gestures to negotiate and validate the students' role in his "symbolic" community as a "musician".

Students are very aware of being "labelled". While they wish to be labelled as a "good" performer or some self-defined "musician", they are fearful that others will attempt to label them otherwise<sup>22</sup>. This UWO graduate explains.

Yea, I didn't...I tried not to advertise it because the jazz thing can become a novelty quite quickly. You know, you can become the token jazz player. Which I was by fourth year but that felt a little more legit. because I'd actually worked with these people in other capacities. But they knew I played jazz and said would you like to help out with this. But I didn't...but

it was quite conscious not to labelled the token jazz player when I came here. (A8:17)

Another UWO student explains how it is possible to "label" your performing ability.

**But you say your teacher didn't come in and say your the third worst flute player.**

No, not at all. But from comments in class saying things like you're the only one who's prepared for the jury or something like that. And you have an idea where you stand. Nothing definitely ..... she's pretty conscious of that I think coming out and saying who's better, from comments.

**What about the students? Do they make up there own mind.**

Yea and people are pretty well able by what ensemble they get into too. That kind of labels how good you are too. (M3-3:24/5)

Students are also aware that the "label" simply does not stick very well. They learn that it must be constantly re-negotiated. Particularly a positive labelling seems most often reported as "tentative ", perhaps because being labelled some sort of "good" musician carries with it a perception of a certain social power or prestige. We are reminded of a similar report by Whyte (1955:23) in his Street Corner Society where social ranking was dependant upon bowling ability and that prestige in the "gang" was dependent upon these bowling scores. Similarly the opinion that music students hold of themselves which is based so heavily on their perception of

themselves as a "musician" appears to be challenged regularly and becomes a career negotiation. This MUN student explains.

**Okay. Now let's shift the other way. Do you have an opinion of yourself as a musician?**

That varies from day to day. I don't know, there are some times when I think I'm not sure I know anything, per se, about music but then the next day you turn around and say....sure I do...(P3:12)

Kingsbury (1984:75) points to a similar direction in his discussion of "talent" when he writes that "what must be emphasized, however, is that an attribution of "talent" brings positive value to a perceived social inequality". Thus the only aggressive strategy open to music education students appears to be what Kingsbury (1984:247-250) calls "self-presentation strategy". This, he claims, results because "in many if not all cases the student both is the recitalist and yet feels very foreign to the role and thus must play at being a recitalist. It is from this posture that students refer to their own "assured appearance" as a "facade". This, claims Kingsbury, "is indeed an indication of the self-conscious and strategic nature of her demeanour". Thus students appear to develop active or aggressive strategies to make certain that their claim on the label "musician" is taken seriously. Students who do otherwise, claims Kingsbury, "abdicates interest in the success of the event".

It may be of some interest to point out that Kingsbury forges his argument to show that stagefright is a social problem which results from the tension between the person and the role. Our purpose in this analysis is to emphasise the overt nature of

the strategic social planning employed by the students to ensure positive societal reaction, thereby returning to Kingsbury notion of "attribution".

Although students are expected by others and expect themselves to make technical and musical progress, a student's performing ability is seen not to change much day to day. In order to maintain one's perception of oneself in relation to this performing prowess which may not be recognized by self or others without constant re-affirmation, students look to the referent others in their social lives to provide this societal reaction and thereby the re-affirmation of status as a "musician". This "feedback" is expected from both peers and tutors. This MUN student recalls her experience.

No not really. I found it very frustrating in the fact that no one very seldom ever told you you were good. So I mean I was here up 'till a couple of months ago apart from you, and I say that in all honesty, making me feel like I could sing, you know which is my major. I really wondered sometimes whether I should be here or not because no one ever said gee you've got a good voice or you know.

**Not even the students?**

Ah, not really. You know you would perform and they say very nice and that was it. But you don't look for it from your students, you don't expect everybody to come out and say you're great I don't want that but I do like and I've said this, and I've said it to the teachers, you know I feel that while we do a lot of things that probably are not right, we also do a lot of things that are right, and I think we need positive as well as negative. Feedback from what we do you know. (P6:14/5)



This "feedback", as this student constructs her notion of societal reaction, appears to provide an accepted realistic mirror to what this student is presenting. Thus it might be supposed that the student gains her sense of herself as a "musician" more as a result of the reaction than by the fact she appears able to present herself in this way. The apparent fleeting nature of this label in this music school seems to cause this insecurity. In fact, if we return to Goffman (1959:245) he writes,

A correctly staged and performed scene leads the audience to impute a self to a performed character, but this imputation - this self - is a product of a scene that comes off, and not a cause of it.

Thus students appear to negotiate their claim on the "musician" label so that others can label them as they themselves wish to be seen. There is no requirement made by students that the imputation or attribution of the "label" be grounded in any perceived reality. We are reminded of Glaser and Strauss' analysis (1965) of dying where the medical personnel withhold the "truth" from dying patients and relations concerning their terminal status. Thus one asks whether this lying or deception is perceived as "truth" in the social setting for certainly it appears as though this is an overt strategy for medical personnel to construct a social reality. Music students appear to generate a similar face-to-face deception with each other. Thus there are accounts of a student's performance made to the student himself which have the appearance of being substantially in conflict with the same person's account told to others. This is perhaps the same kind of "closed awareness context" theory developed by Glaser and Strauss to account for the fact that students are able to attract a positive societal reaction for themselves while at the same time, a different construction of reality is regnant within the greater social world of the students. Thus students often refer to "reputation" as a more stable rendering of the fleeting negotiations, and they

recognize that this reputation is also open to decay. This report from a UWO graduate.

**So you didn't like to practice there?**

Oh no, I didn't say that. I didn't say that, but your reputation is on the line. Everything you do. A lot of it is. It's whether you're practising, performing, or recitals. Most people go to recitals--- A lot of people go to listen, and a lot of people go to criticize. You always have the critics there. (A6:13/4)

Reputation resides in the views of others. This provides a security for students but must be managed. We are reminded that self-worth is interwoven with the "musician" status and of Kingsbury's (1984:266) claim of ties to the "moral worth of the inner person". Thus the reputation as some sort of presumed "good musician" can provide solace for a student wishing to see himself as having "worth" in the music school. Security of reputation was a constant theme with music education students, one of whom states,

In their opinion and probably in some other people's opinions. They weren't necessarily better musicians or anything like that but they felt more secure just because the faculty.

**Secure's what?**

Secure of their reputations here and there.

**Reputation as what?**

Reputation as in whatever other people think of them. If they think that they are worth something, if they think that they will succeed then everybody's.... (A6:17)

Other people's perception and the importance of that is also known by the students. Students talk of negotiating their "success" through the eyes and ears of others. This MUN student explains his view on this aspect of the applied courses he is required to take.

But of course that consumes a fair amount of your time and you must practice everyday and you have a lesson every week and, of course, it's hard to judge your success there. I mean there's your own perception, your perception of what you think other people think of your performance or playing capabilities and of course how you rate it in terms of your 150 250 A and B your practical course. (P2:13)

And it can easily be shown that students are aware that other students are preoccupied with applying the "musician" label, that is, a preoccupation with sorting out the social world and labelling as "musicians" each other to give order to their "symbolic" community. This report from MUN shows this preoccupation with "labelling" each other as a form of social "competition".

#### **What did they talk about?**

I don't know, they were pretty hung up actually the class I was with, it was pretty hung up on who played and how they played and how well they played. Now that has considerably died off in latter years, but there was this big competition sort of head banging thing. (P9:7)

This student returns to this topic later in the interview and explains what was apparently most important in the music school.

**Let's go back to your earlier days again, now. Were you led to believe that anything in particular was important?**

Well, the first couple of years, the students had this big thing about performers. Who played the best. Who was terrible. They talked about each other and talked about, you know, so and so played on Wednesday, it was awful, they can't sing their way out of a paper bag or they can play for beans you know. (P9:7)

The impression suggests that negotiation is necessary. Students are aware of it, at least in a operationalized sense for those who have not verbalised it to themselves. The quality of education can be suggested to be at least partly determined by the opportunities that you carve out of this music school for yourself. If as has been suggested by Kadushin (1969) that performing artists are made not born, then it stands to reason that opportunities to learn these skills must be sought if the student wishes to take full advantage of the limited opportunities that the students have at their disposal. The students seem aware that they must compete for these status rewards. Others will be willing to take your share if you are not. From Vancouver this admission of this suggestion.

***What is it that you talk about? Exactly what is it that you do?***

It's almost like high school stuff right.

**Like what's that?**

One person will sit and say oh did you hear so and so goof up that piece, yea they're a real loser.

**In other words you succumb to exactly the criticism you make of them?**

Of course.

**So you're really no different at all are you?**

Well not in what we talk about or whatever, I mean, yea you have to understand it's like a dog eat, dog world there. If you can't hack the parts you're going to be cut down and somebody's going to take your place. So if you don't stand up for yourself or if you don't try to make way for your own self somebody else is going to walk in and take your spot. I'm talking like strictly for may be band purposes or whatever. (V1:16/7)

In fact, one of the apparent first challenges that students must face is the re-assessment of their own claim on their "musician" status they typically have been enjoying before entering the music school. This has been discussed before using the "big fish, little pond" metaphor. This student recalls the apparent necessity of re-assessment.

Originally to become a hot shot piano player but I decided against it after about a month.

**What changed your mind?**

Well, personally at that age, you know, at 18 years old, you play piano well, you're respected but when you come to Western and you get into the 120 umm ... first year students 70 of them are piano players and you know half of them are better than I am. (A5:9)

The idea that negotiation may be necessary is well accepted in the music school. This re-assessment is a career consideration, a continuous thing during a student's time in the music school and appears to revolve around the apparent quality of performance. There do not appear to be many acts which might suggest Woods(1983:173) "transformational episodes". The "ranking" inside the music school is in constant negotiation. This third-year student at UWO explains.

But, they think competitiveness comes with the musician. I don't like to be competitive it's like, something else that I noticed when I first came here is how most people who were at the top of their school come in here and expected to be one of the best players and it hit me about December of my first year. All the people that are here were the best players in their high school too. And all of a sudden it's all the best moved together. Now you have to determine the worst and the best again. And that's what I don't like. I do like to determine this at all, it doesn't make any difference. (M3-1:14)

Like the "critic" role, the students do not all find this re-assessment to their liking but nevertheless admit that it seems necessary. In fact, one student referred to this process as a "first-year paranoia" and likened it to a "game".

**So you think the whole competitive thing dies away?**

Yea, I think it's a lot of paranoia in the first year, I don't think, I think it's like you're coming around and thinking. Like you're the best in the city and from when I was best in the city and I think I come here and. So it's kind of a game; that's being on top and going to the bottom. (M3-3:23)

The negotiation seems to begin by establishing for yourself where you think your position is on this ladder of performing prowess. This is accomplished by taking into account the many things listed earlier in this section. What music are you carrying around compared to the music you see others carrying around. The repertoire is known by those in the music school and is organized, albeit informally at times, into levels of difficulty. The Conservatories provide this service for the lower levels of performance repertoire. Thus students will typically talk about playing grade 9 or 10 pieces or "AR" pieces.<sup>23</sup> This student in Vancouver explains how that is transformed into negotiated action.

Yes oh definitely because then they get out of the grades,<sup>24</sup> they don't even think of grades anymore and they're just beyond that.

**That's right. But everybody knows if you're playing that one that's harder than the other one.**

You know exactly which one is ... yes.

**That's the day you leave the door not quite closed.**

Oh well you know which rooms were the active ones, I mean, which everybody would sort of stand and listen at the door listening to who it was in there, oh who's that, oh it's so and so. You could always tell by the touch. (V1:9)

The "fact gathering" expeditions to the corridors of the practice rooms serves as an important strategy in the negotiation process. Some students get known for this activity<sup>25</sup>. Others rely on those who practice such strategies to supply second hand information.

Well it's kind of, they don't like xxxx they don't like coming here from the master class and wanting to sing or people listening outside your door when your practising.

**They do that do they?**

Yea people do that, they don't do it as, they'll stand on the other side of the hall and sit there and .... just listen or just walking by and you hear somebody standing and listening.

**Then what happens? You run off and tell somebody.**

No, you just have it in your mind.

**Oh so you take out your notebook and you go.**

No, no you just have it in your mind what's going on, who you think is better and stuff like that. (M3-3:25)

Another opportunity is simply while you are practising yourself. The students admit to the "very thin walls" of the music school.

**Do you hear things like she should really give it up? Or why is she bothering trying that or some other or some other indication that there is an assessment has been made?**

Yea you get that every once in a while.

**What happens? How does that work?**

Just people hear people play and ...

**Through the door?**

Through the doors, through the walls. This place and really thin walls.

**Okay, and ...**



And you know personalities sometimes conflict and then, of course, all of a sudden you know I really don't like her playing meanwhile it is I really don't like her.

**Is there a lot of that?**

Some people are better for it than others. In general, every once in a while you might get a little jab but people are pretty good. (M4-9:47/8)

Some students become very good at this "eavesdropping" but even the well experienced ones sometimes face situations where their actions run amuck. The situation here shows not only the possibility of listening in but also that action is taken as a result. When it doesn't work out as intended there may be consequences which are unexpected. It is, however, not unheard of to simply to walk into a practice room to check out the competition when the window is covered<sup>26</sup> and it appears important to see for sure who is playing.

I remember one occasion though with a senior student actually, whom I never really got along with or took to, but I was practising in a room in the music building one day, and she came in the room because she thought it was her friend who was a pianist and quite good. But when she discovered it was me, it was obvious that she was totally shocked. She couldn't possibly have thought that I was her friend, you know what I mean. That was one incident I recall. (P9:16)

In fact, some students refused to practice in the music school simply because these felt unable to compete with the music-making around them.

Most of these people who had, who were in the department were people who had been playing since they were five and knew they were going to do music as a career since they were five and had the very best teachers and performing for ages and

I didn't have any of that, so naturally I am not going to be at the same level. And it bothered me for a long time, I just felt really inadequate and I wouldn't practice in the rooms there where anybody would hear me because you know (P9:14)

Another student strategy was to hang around outside of offices of faculty who taught your applied major, not however necessarily your own teacher.

**So how do you introduce yourself down here?**

Just...the only time that happens is when you get in the small talk and people ask what you play or you meet someone who plays the same instrument. Like if you play saxophone and you meet another saxophonist.

**Because they walk by with a saxophone case..**

Or they're standing beside the saxophone professor's office.  
(M1-7:2/3)

Carrying your instrument around is a typical strategy. Pianists however lose on two issues here. Firstly, they obviously cannot carry the thing around and secondly, perhaps more importantly, they do not have as many performing opportunities in ensembles and are relegated to various choirs instead<sup>27</sup>. To overcome this lack of "presentation" opportunities, many pianists become "well-known" accompanists and then appear with other instrumentalists and singers. Of course, the better the reputation the instrumentalist or singer has, the more status accrues to their accompanist<sup>28</sup>. This music education student asserts the claim on superior performing skills through accompanying.

**Do you play as well as a performance major?**

Yea I did. I think I do.

**Do people recognize that?**

Yea. I do a lot of the accompanying and I don't believe that sounds very conceited, but I really feel that if I want to go in performance I could easily, and that. But another way too, I don't really think that performance majors have a handle on life. I think that there really having a lot of problems with what they're going to do...(M4-1:14)

In the performing ensembles, students are required to prove themselves over and over again, often several times a week. In the instrumental groups the chairs are assigned by audition but usually open to challenge at any time. In the choral groups, particularly the Faculty of Music Singers at UWO, there are perceived "usual" criteria for entrance besides just the audition and students who do not meet these other perceived requirements and are accepted on the basis of the audition report that they find themselves under significant pressure to negotiate a suitable status. This saxophone major recalls his acceptance into the "Singers".

Well you have to kind of earn their respect I guess. Don't sing too many wrong notes and don't get too many bad stares. You kind of have to prove yourself, once you get in, like the people I've talked to find that hard, they get in there and everybody looks at you like <what are you doing in here?>

**Like <just a sax player>!**

Yea. I think it must seem a little nervy too them when this is what all the vocal performance majors are in and here comes a sax player, like why aren't you in jazz or something.

**So what happened?**

A lot of it is that he's short of men in general at that sort of level and he lost a lot of tenors last year and he's really crying for tenors this year. So this year they are kind of glad to get people because he was going to cut down the size this year and then some of them wouldn't be in it. Like they know what the situation is. They can't deny that they are short of people. I've never had any singing lessons but I was in a choir here last year and I've sung in a church choir downtown the last couple of years. I think people are really happy to be in it. Everybody wants to be in it. (M3-7:8)<sup>29</sup>

Even in an apparently less competitive ensemble than the "Singers" students report the need to develop strategies to negotiate their way into the group. Because music skills are vast and varied, students who can easily negotiate their claim on piano may be more uneasy about their ability to do so in the required choral situation they find themselves in.

**So tell me what you felt like at this rehearsal.**

Well, awful, like I was the only one there who didn't know what they were doing, which I figured out later, it probably not true. But you know, I felt totally inept, but there was something about \*\*\*\*\* , something's happening here, this guy is really good. (A8:4)

The rumour mill is another serious strategy. Students make comments about events and other students' performing. Some of these are disguised into a form that appears less threatening but others are not. Students are aware of this in the same way as they are of their "critic" role but participate in any case. It becomes particularly aggressive when one group attacks another group, such as a feud between students of two different voice teachers. Members feel protected inside the group and tend to view their participation as supportive of a group position rather than any

commitment to express the same opinions individually. But the "remarks" that are made can be very challenging to a student's claim as a "musician".

Well, I think so. But, of course, you know you've got to be careful in how, how do you...how do I look and say this fellow thinks his better because his so good. I mean there's often a condescending attitude, you see remarks made to other people maybe, but a how do you judge somebody is what I'm saying. How do I really judge and say he thinks his better. I mean what do I know what his going through in terms of gee, you know he can really played this instrument but my God I keep flunking history or theory. A that's a real concern to him and he looks at some other person why is it they can do history and theory so well I mean gee, I got to know that stuff too to become a competent musician I should have a good background. I don't really know but I mean, you know, what's verbal lot of times is centred around what, you know, remarks maybe of somebody else's playing I mean you hear something in the practice room and you know there might be a few remarks in jest. Some of them you know aren't serious ultimately but some of them you wonder if they are. (P2:17/8)

In fact, the conversations between students and faculty alike seldom seem to focus on concerns like academic matters. This MUN student explains.

To a lot of profs, you know.....for example the topic of conversation is not whether I have an 85% average, its who won the Rose Bowl or whose playing the Grieg or that type of thing. (P1:18)<sup>30</sup>

Another strategy used with respect to "talk" is to make use of various "facts" about music to negotiate your own claim or to invalidate someone else's claim on the label "musician". Other students (A11:27) simply refer to "word getting around".

Music students claim to know things, particularly repertoire which they may not be able to perform themselves. This provides the extension on their own claim and shows others that without this knowledge their claim may not be substantiated, for example,

**That's exactly what I mean. Do they just look down their noses at this poor guy raised on country?**

Yea, they'll say < what are you doing here? You don't know the aria from the last act of Rigoletto. And that just means that I have to work that much harder if I'm going to be a musician and a music teacher and I'm expected to know this much then I'm just going to have to work that much harder. Which is another reason why I go to all these concerts so I can say, yes I heard that Sonata last year and I know something about it.  
(M2-10:12)

Another "talk" claim concerns the status of your applied teacher. Students admit that it is nice to be able to report on the superior status of your teacher. This status transfer by affiliation has been thoroughly discussed before and here it is important to show that it is nevertheless important in the list of strategies used in the negotiation process with the other students.

And he's not a big name around but he's a fabulous player.

**So why is it so neat to be able to do this.**

It's kind of gloating I guess.

**So you do think it's important then.**

I don't really, but it's nice to say. (M2-7:11)

Of course, applied teachers enjoy an apparently socially agreed upon reputation and those students of the very best teachers are often found defending their own musician status based solely on the "fact" that they are in a particular teacher's class. Another example confirms this notion that students like to report to others about their teacher to negotiate their own claim.

**So back to this performing, do you think it makes any difference if a history prof performs?**

What they do is what they want to do. It doesn't make that much difference to me. If they want to perform that's their personal choice. But I can see where some people get hung up on the fact that their teacher performs like to say <I studied under Glenn Gould - aren't you impressed> you know.

**I think that's exactly it.**

Now whether or not you can play is another thing.

**Yea but that's not part of the conversation very often.**

No, no. (M3-4:19)

Because performance skills should improve with practice and better performers accrue more status, students usually make a fair deal of fuss about "going to practice". Students leaving the lounge almost always announce their intention to go to work (=practice) and the amount of practice they do is a constant source of dialogue. There is, however, a "supposed to" amount and a "I really did" amount. The students are usually aware of the difference.

**Before I interrupted you, you were going to go on to say it was supposed to be..., how much are you supposed to practice?**

Oh I don't know. You always hear people saying oh yea I've been practising 2 hours a day and....

**You believe them?**

No. I think the ones who do practice a lot are the ones who don't say it. And the people who are going around flaunting how much they are practising are the ones who are really insecure about their playing. And fell as though they have to brag a bit. (M2-5:2)

In addition to announcing that they are off to practice, the conversation usually centres around how much and what they practice. This shows the repertoire that they are presently working on and because of the status attributed to harder pieces, students seek to inform others of the technically difficult selections under consideration. This example from Vancouver demonstrates this well.

**that's what this "I'm off to work" hi ho hi ho message is all about.**

Yea. Some people are like that yea, definitely. They do make a point of letting people know when they practice, how long they practice and what they're working on and things like that, "Oh what are you working on now", you know. (V1:8)

Students also make a point of telling their applied professors that they are working. It appears insufficient just to demonstrate the improvement. This report from MUN shows this.



**Why do you suppose they're getting higher marks?**

For the reasons that I've stated before. Because I think they realize that they're putting more time in on their practice. Or at least they're telling the profs that they're putting more time in on practice. I mean I didn't go to any of my lessons unprepared, but if someone asked me did I put in three hours a day I would say no. (P6:15)

It must be said that the apparent reality is that one can never practise enough<sup>31</sup>. One cannot become too good because the upper limit of skill in performance even for the most gifted is bound to the notion of socially determined limitless hard work.

Because when you are in music you can never do enough work. You can never practice enough. (A10:9)

Because the members of this music school apparently agree on this, all levels below this unattainable must be negotiated and the standards must be set by the closed society. Nevertheless, there is an apparent myth about the practice habits expected in the music school. This newcomer admits that he has not felt this pressure yet. Does he expect to?

That's about noon, that's when I have my spare. Or just sit and talk to a friend. Everything is really slow so far. I haven't really felt much pressure to practice 6 hours a day.

**How much practice do you do?**

That's very hard cause I don't really time myself. Maybe 2 hours. (M1-4:11)

In fact, those students who do appear to camp out in the practice rooms at UWO have become known to the other students as "practice bunnies". Students have also admitted that there may be academic consequences as well as labelling consequences to not negotiating in this way with one's applied teacher. This student at MUN explains the situation with her teacher.

Well, I just, no, really I don't. That's a lie I do. Voice for instance ok I feel the first year I was in here I was labelled because I never got a high mark and I was disappointed because I felt I deserved it and I think the reason being that I never practised three hours a day you know and I suppose I'm very outspoken and the teacher knows that you know I don't say I practice three hours if I haven't done it and therefore knowing that I didn't have the time in that lowered the mark you know or if I asked for help in the language that lowered the mark. I don't think that's right you know. I think you should be basically, it says that you're marked on your jury and I think it should work that way. If I'm capable of singing as good as the next guy, with an hours practice a day or less than I think I deserve the mark. Maybe it takes me twice as long to study a subject you know. (P6:6/7)

In fact, this notion that life appears to be able to be negotiated solely on the claim that so and so many hours have been spent in a practice room led this graduate from UWO to admit that life after the music school now seems more "real".

**Are the other people still practising?**

I don't know.

**You knew last year, almost to the minute.**

I think that it's no longer part of the educational process here. Your applied music. It feels very much more like real life here. If it's a priority for you I think you have to make the decision

to keep it going. It comes out in your playing or other activities rather than the number of hours in the practice room. (2A8:17)

With serious performance, students must simply "produce". This is what Kingsbury 1984:267) refers to as the "willingness to take risks". This theme is not uncommon in music education literature<sup>32</sup>. Many students who are not required to play in solo recitals prefer not to. While they do not gain status without a solo recital, they do not lose any status by playing poorly in the eyes of others. Thus they adopt a neutral position in practice while maintaining the rhetoric that they could but have perhaps neither the time nor interest.

In situations that are somewhat less threatening, such as performances on secondary instruments or in the voice class, students sometimes resort to deceit to meet the objective of not proving their incompetence. This example comes from UWO.

#### **How was your performance accepted?**

Uhm, let me think, the first one....fairly well, I was very shy about it. And I think the comments were < < you know - don't play the piano - we had to accompany ourselves our very first performance - don't play the piano so loud, we can't hear you > > . I did that on purpose. (A11:13)

Other opportunities to negotiate a claim as a musician are seized when they have the safety of being informal. One such common example is the playing of the piano at the front of the room while others are gathering for classes such as music history

or theory. In this situation the students can "fiddle around" with things that they might have to take seriously elsewhere. Such opportunities are used to "show off" a bit of some very difficult piece to others and thereby saying "see, this is what I'm learning". This student at UWO explains.

**When you go to this class and this person is playing, have they just been sitting around practising or is it that you come 5 minutes early and somebody rushes up to play the piano?**

Well usually last year in homework sessions, before ear-training, people would come in early and somebody would just go up to the piano and just run through a piece or something.

**Why would they do that?**

Just to try a new piano or test their memory maybe? I would play if I had a section that I'd just memorized. I'd try it quietly while people were wandering in. (M2-8:12)

The presentation of self as a musician in the music school seems necessary. It is at least operationalized as an agreed upon requirement. The negotiation for the application of this label by others is important because the students appear aware that they will be labelled by the members of the community as some sort of "musician" in any case. It apparently becomes imperative to develop strategies to negotiate for the label which is socially defined as that sort of "musician" that one wishes himself to be seen as and to some extent by a "valued" Other. The negotiation is extremely dramatic and theatrical. It involves the presentation of a "front" composed of elements of "setting" and "appearance" and "manner" and symbolically represents a "cluster of meanings". Thus what counts as a musician is negotiated by means of this presentation and the societal reaction that a student can garner for his social performance. Props are

everywhere and because of the apparent lack of an upper limit on performance prowess, the institutional standard is set in a way that makes the negotiation for the application of the label reasonable and probable. Some deception is apparent in the negotiation process but is condoned and often expected by the members of the music school. Some "acts" are seen as more significant than others, thus explaining the rather high importance placed on not having a poor or bad performance. But no single act seems alone to account for what Woods (1983:173) refers to as a "transformational episode". There may, of course, be episodes which in effect seem like they alter the nature of the socially constructed musician identity but they are "critical" episodes which are usually attached to a "reputation" and are in common-sense terms the proverbial "straw that broke the camel's back". Thus as episodes themselves, they are not responsible for the transformation of an identity but are signalling episodes which indicate that such a redefinition or transformation of identity has already taken place for which this "critical" act seems to be the proof.

Certain "valued" persons seem important in the negotiation of a "music school" musician. Because so many students appear to reject a definition of musician which might give the appearance of consensus within the symbolic community, it is difficult to point to any specific group that might be said to be "valued" others. Nevertheless, certain reference groups provide an opportunity to test one's definition of musician and one's claim to that label by the systematic and planned search for a positive societal reaction from these groups.

We now turn to the process of identifying the clues that suggest that this "musician" label has been successfully applied.

## Notes for Chapter Nine

1. The use of "support" in this analysis follows that suggested by McCall and Simmons (1978:70) where they write, "what we call role-support, which is the expressed support accorded to an actor by his audience for his claims concerning his role-identity". Somewhat later in a footnote they add, "the reactions of others simply have not supported the specific contents of their role-identities" when discussing the suicide of successful businessmen and beautiful movie stars who apparently have "everything to live for". Thus it is with music education students' construct of "musician" as a specific content and self-constructed identity for which support is sought to substantiate the claim on the musician identity.

2. as does Blumer (1965) with his rejection of determinism. See page 294 in this thesis.

3. There are usually instances where very good students play rather "rare" instruments.

4. This is, of course, central to the claim made in SI to "expose the nature, content, structure, and dynamics of this knowledge, much of which is tacit" (Hargreaves, 1978:19 in Barton & Meighan, 1978)

5. There are obvious exceptions here such as organ, piano, harp and string bass. However, these students overcome this by carrying the music for these instruments. In fact, it appears as though the absence of any instrument typically places the student in one of the categories above. Singers often resort to "special" props to help their identification in the music schools. One particular student comes to mind at UWO who was never seen without her rather "obvious" long scarf. Considering it was often 25 degrees C, one could hardly mistake this "prop" for anything else.

6. This "rung on a ladder" metaphor is one that seems quite clearly in operation in the music school and the music students are constantly using this relative simple device among themselves. They are, for many of the students, far too preoccupied with this competitive "ranking". There is an implied normative standard about "performing" but at the same time, the definition of "musician" is so generally non-specific, it is somewhat confusing to make a normative claim while at the same time trying to emphasize that what counts as a musician may also be negotiated as it is incorporated into this normative claim.

7. Goffman's (1959) "role distance" where students separate a role into stages or rungs on a ladder and then detach themselves from one rung to claim a higher rung. This results in a situation where the students try to define their own role as different from those around them are trying to define it for them. Thus the opportunity to "role-

make" is dependent upon a disassociation with this "lower" rung. See (1984) Penguin Dictionary of Sociology, p.210

8.negative reference group (Kelley, 1952)

9.It is difficult to comment on the "cause-effect" model at play here. It might be that since the "outside" musical world does not take into account the graduate status of the music school leaver that that frees the music school from taking into account an outside standard for its internal operation.

10.the trumpet players, the clarinet players, etc.

11.It seems to be an acknowledged thing that students are aware of the "agreed upon" relative difficulty of certain standard pieces for their applied major instruments. Often this was based on the Conservatory published lists but regularly played pieces in the music school were "inserted" into their appropriate place on this "mythical" list. Therefore, when a student displayed a certain piece in the lounge, it was understood that Others would understand the status associated with the list. In fact, the apparent "knowing" and commenting on the status of these particular pieces was a form of social status itself. Students could demonstrate that they were "knowledgeable" enough to know that this or that piece was "high" on the difficulty list (status list) and gain "points" for their knowledge. Thus both the "pretenders" (Woods, 1983:171) and the observers were rewarded by this social act.

12.Students report being very distressed with applied teachers who take on a role as mediator of the comparative group. Students are happy enough with normative reference but do not like teachers to compare specific students to others. Because one is what one musics (Elliott, 1989), the comparison about the music becomes a comparison about the people.

13.In fairness, the conflict that arises between student and mentor in this relationship is seldom one sided. Since the status of both student and teacher is interwoven to a great extent, teachers that seem to engender frequent conflicts pose a serious threat to their own status.

14.refer back to the "list" of repertoire and the "knowledge" claim made about it.

15.As stated earlier, the conferring of the "label" is considered to be the goal of social action. Because the label "musician" is not a single easily defined thing, each act of labelling means that some notion of musician has been conferred upon the student and thus the student is able to build an identity as a musician in a form for which he is able to garner positive societal reaction in the form of the conferring of this label. Thus each actor is able to offer for societal reaction his own version of what counts for a musician and each Other is able to define what counts as a musician and either offer or deny the conferring of the label "musician".

16. It must be pointed out again that there are about 600 students at the music school at UWO. The apparent lack of concert attendance must therefore be taken seriously by any analysis.
17. again this apparent dichotomy between normative reference and comparative reference simultaneously.
18. This section expands on the notion presented earlier in the analysis that showed that the parents' perceptions of music study provided a source for viewing the music school both as an insider community and as socially suspect.
19. This final design was not what had been originally intended but a change in government funding patterns removed much of the needed money to create the building that had been originally planned. Nevertheless, a view elsewhere such as new buildings at Brandon University and MUN show that the result would have been substantially the same in any case.
20. Good descriptions and pictures of the music school facilities at MUN and Brandon University can be found in the Canadian Music Educator, 27#2, Dec. 1985.
21. This of course points out that "time" itself must be considered important. If a student arrives directly before a concert in a tuxedo, then that might be considered simply as part of that "instance" whereas students who wander around for many hours "outside" the concert time must be engaged in a strategy for some specific purpose. There is ample opportunity for student to change and store their "costumes" during these otherwise "outside times".
22. This is consistent with McCall & Simmons (1978:70) who write, "other people demand that one claim some identity. If he does not, they are unsure how to classify him and consequently are not sure of how to act toward him. The result is that, if he does not claim some social identity, other people will force one upon him".
23. The "AR" refers to the ARCT performance diploma of the Royal Conservatory.
24. These are the conservatory grades, not "marks" from the university.
25. This was referred to in one instance by a student as the "flat-ear syndrome" because of the nature of listening at the practice room doors with an ear on the door itself.
26. Most practice rooms in the music schools have small windows in the doors. These are typically covered over by the students to protect as much as possible their anonymity while practising; an effective strategy itself.
27. Pianists have a special problem here since many are terrible singers although they may be very fine pianists by comparison. But often their "public" image is more visible as a "singer" rather than as a "pianist". This causes many keyboard players, who lack the same "exposure" that the instrumentalists enjoy, to undertake some



rather aggressive strategies to get out of singing in these choirs. In most music schools there are a limited number of "alternatives" to choir singing such as an excessive participation in chamber ensembles or even accompanying the very choirs in which, as a singer, these students may see themselves unable to construct an acceptable identity in the eyes of Others.

28. Perhaps the most famous and bizarre representation of this was with the decided terrible singer Florence Foster Jenkins. She was so bad in fact that her accompanist always performed behind a screen on the stage to protect his identity.

29. Note the "crying for tenors" indicating the superior status by voice type mentioned earlier.

30. The "Rose Bowl" is the top award offered in the St. John's music festival and a sought after prize by many music students.

31. This is similar to the academic requirements made of medical students as reported by Becker et al. (1961) in The Boys in White.

32. see Roberts, B. (1988:29-30)

## Interpretive strategies in a successful identity construction

If music education students are seeking to be viewed by others as "musicians", it is obvious that they must recognize clues which provide them with indications of having successfully achieved a recognition by others as having offered a valid sociological performance<sup>1</sup> as a "musician". Perinbanayagam (1985:197) writes,

In an interactional context, however, the concept of self is inadequate: it does not take account of the varieties of the terms in which existence is conducted by a person. In distinction to one's self-conception and different from a notion of a cherished or committed self, a person can be situated and placed in an immediately interactional context; he or she can be positioned as a social object and when this occurs, we can say that he or she has an identity.

Stone (1970:399)<sup>2</sup> suggested earlier that,

One's identity is established when others place him as a social object by assigning him the same words of identity that he appropriates for himself or announces. It is in the coincidence of placements and announcements that identity becomes a meaning of the self...

As has been demonstrated, music students, in their construction of social action, appear to show that they seek to have an identity validated, that is "assigned", as a "musician". But unlike other students in professional schools in a university such as dentistry or medicine, law or engineering, music students must demonstrate that they "are" a musician before they gain entrance to the program. While they seem to acknowledge this perception of themselves as a "musician" at the time of their entrance to the music school, once within, they appear to be challenged to redefine themselves in the new situation. This becomes Stone's (1970) idea of coincidence of placements. Thus students are challenged to reassess the term "musician" and what the meaning might be in this new situation. Harré and Secord (1972:264)) suggest that "terms like 'coward' are not used just as summaries of powers and liabilities, but are meant to have explanatory for, and to explain why a person displays this or that pattern of behaviour". Using this suggestion for the term "musician". it might further strengthen the case made earlier concerning the importance of the social construction of the "musician" status. The music education students continue to redefine the term "musician" and in the new situational context progress toward the re-establishment of their identity as a "musician" once on the inside of the music school. The "coward" continues to be viewed by others as a "coward" and doing cowardly acts despite possible attempts to shake off such a "label" and the music student continues to do musicking<sup>3</sup> acts in the hope that such a "label" cannot be shaken off. As Harré and Secord point out, the difference with respect to the application of these terms may

"hinge only on differing accounts of similar patterns of action". Implicit in these observations, that is concerning "patterns of action" is the notion of career, for it is not a societal expectation of a single "act" which students seek to fulfil but one of a process. Perinbanayagam (1985:198) refers to this as the "idea of a person progressing". Therefore within the music school, the nature of the account, as a musician, may be different than that offered by an outsider, even when the outsider is on the verge of entering the social world of the music school. Therefore, it appears that the music education students must continue to re-negotiate their claim for recognition as a "musician" during their time in the music school. Accounts offered in this analysis earlier have shown instances where music education students have assumed what Goffman (1959:123-146) calls "discrepant roles"<sup>4</sup> but generally, the music education students appear to seek a more typical role. It is perhaps in light of this notion of varying accounts not so curious a development that, having demonstrated that they are entitled to this claim upon entrance, that somehow this entitlement might wain despite a continued preoccupation with things musical.

It has been suggested by Becker, Geer and Hughes (1961) in their Boys in White that medical school students suspend their claim on being "doctors" while in the medical school in preference to being "students" seeking to satisfy academic requirements rather than "playing" physician. Law students, despite moot court, seldom "play" at being lawyers but study to become them at graduation. In fact, the final claim on these professional statuses can only be substantiated with the completion of an acceptable academic programme and the awarding of an appropriate degree. As has been indicated earlier, society seems to establish a rather clear contract with those persons wishing to engage in the practice of medicine or law.

The music student seems to operate without such a contract with society. Layman society, as music school outsiders, seems to recognize a "musician" with little hesitation. And the layman rewards those who it considers to be superior with substantial amounts of money and prestige. What passes for a "musician" to the layman outsider does not appear to generate totally the rules for the social construction of what passes for a "musician" within the music school. A society of layman outsiders for example might also acknowledge the apparently poor performing musician with "he tries" but nevertheless support opportunities for even these people to act as though there *were* "musicians". But these are outsiders who appear to offer different accounts for what passes as a "musician".

Becker (1973:190) writes that,

with Sancho Panza, a windmill is really a windmill. To think it a knight on horseback is, however you look at it, a real mistake.

Notice however, that if the theatre audience were to take the view that Becker suggests, our musical would be over before the story began. While Sancho may very well indeed present a more "real" perspective on life, it is no more than that, a different view of the reality. It is the reality of the "Man of La Mancha" himself that drives this story. For if Aldonza were not his "Lady" but the whore that she is in Sancho's world, how would Don Quixote attract the qualities of the Knight he perceives himself to be. How would the "Impossible Dream" come to show the audience that the "reality" that Quixote lives, is the "reality" of truth, a truth that

exists beyond the rape in the courtyard of the tavern, a quest for a reality that we would want to live rather than one we must live.

Many music education students appear to want to live a construction of reality that confirms on them an identity as the kind of "musician" that fits into a world they can seldom enter. While they often claim that they have the "talent" to justify this identity, they typically offer reasons as to why this talent may not be fully realised. Thus the music school sometimes allows them a brief time in their life when this outside "reality" is suspended and they can indeed "play" at being the "musician" they wish to be and the "musician" that the music school appears to hold as "real". Of course, once removed from the music school on graduation, these music education students often are seen as representatives of exactly this kind of "musician" because of their superior skill as an executionist and their specific musical knowledge. Thus it is easy to understand why the student at the UWO Faculty of Education who quit the program might very well indeed see his own superior "musician" status as inappropriate to place in a school where, in his perception, the students were disinterested and untalented.

Rubington and Weinberg (1973, p.228) describe a "deviance corridor" where the occupant may step in and out of various stages in the career pattern of a deviant. While the boundaries are symbolic between these stages in the corridor, they are nevertheless the symbols by which others define the occupant. This is perhaps an appropriate model for the label seeking music student since many never arrive at the end of the corridor. Most are ushered out of one of the earlier side doors and while they may have participated in "musicking acts" they cannot sustain the role until it becomes their "identity" in their own eyes or those of others.

It is clear that the negotiation process for the label "musician" is a continuous one, not dependant upon a single episode but on a career model. It has been shown that the nature of "reputation" is a social construct that music students use regularly to regulate the otherwise radical possibilities in definition of single episodes. It is difficult for an observer to determine how music education students assess whether they have been successfully labelled. The students as well appear to have difficulty in determining whether they have been successful in the negotiation process to claim their stake on an identity as a "musician".

Unlike the doctor or lawyer, the fleeting assessment as a "musician" is not confirmed with the presentation of a single university degree or professional registration. It appears that musicians must await the decision of others on each and every episode, that is performance. The musician himself seeks an "identity" and others appear to confer that "identity" by labelling the "musician" as such. It is important to point out again that this "musician" is a complex social construct and individual "acts" may only contribute to part of the definition of this construct. This means that the socially constructed version of the musician construct can only be validated in its entirety with many different successful musicking acts. While this is consistent with Becker's often quoted definition of deviance through labelling theory that one is considered having an deviant identity largely through the process of having others label you as such (Becker, 1973:9), the reader can see that "being a musician" and being labelled as such may be more socially complicated than being labelled a "murderer". In this latter case, a single act of murder can result in a once-and-for-all successful societal labelling. Apparently, with the musician identity, this is only possible with a regular series of acts and "announcements" (Stone, 1970).

While reputation can support an identity through a number of social challenges in this respect, each and every episode appears to influence one's legitimate claim on the identity. In fact, it seems that only within the official schooling system, where teachers claim their status on the basis of the degrees they hold, is the music teacher secure as a musician in a way which resembles the "doctor" or "lawyer" professional model. Thus school music teachers seem able to presume an identity as a "musician" without the regular performance challenges that a practising performer might have to negotiate.

For those of us that have, in the view of others around us, collected the requisite experience as a performer, the perceived identity as a "musician" can stick with some security. This is similar to Sennet and Cobb's (1973:77) notion of "badges of identity" illustrated earlier in the section on "talent". This student explains how this operates for students with respect to this author.

I mean everyone knows, of course, that you have been editor of the CMEA Journal for years now and that elevates your status considerably but in addition to that, I mean, I know certainly, I'm sure most of the others are aware that you have been singing here, there, and everywhere and major works with orchestras, choral groups and what have you around the country and that you perform opera and oratorio in Europe. So nobody questions with a background like that, nobody ever questioned, you're going to be a musician. It just didn't entered into their minds, it is assumed that there is a very very high level of competence there and so immediately that eliminates that question from our minds and we can get on the other business. (P8:21)

On the other hand, this student would be the first to point out that he is not prepared to accept the claim by many of his peers for the "musician" label.



...but frequently I find myself listening to my colleagues playing piano or trumpet or trombone or whatever it is they do and finding myself very frustrated and sometimes amused to the point of wondering how it is they ever got where they were.  
(P8:10)

The idea that some are labelled as varying kinds of musicians than others is clear enough. There seem to be an infinite variety of socially constructed definitions which appear to be contained within the normative reference group's values and norms. This may be best explained again by referring back to Cohen's (1985) idea of "invisible boundaries". It is, however, important to review the position that while the music education students may have a number of statuses, it is the musician status, in whatever form it is being negotiated, that appears to function as a "master status". Becker (1963:32) describes a similar notion when he writes,

Thus a doctor, whatever else he may be, is a person who has a certificate stating that he has fulfilled certain requirements and is licensed to practice medicine; this is the master trait.

Furthermore, the potency of this master status in the music school can be further demonstrated to have a major impact on the desire to be seen in this way. Becker (1963:37) writes,

When a person makes a definite move into an organized group - or when he realizes and accepts the fact that he already has done so - it has a powerful impact on his conception of himself.

Thus the apparent necessity to seek to be labelled as one of the more desirable varieties of "musician" and the notion that the labelling process may be at work independent of any consensus of perceived "truth" frequently appeared in the transcripts. This student refers to the process as better "in quotation marks". This apparently implies that the labelling may not have been accurate or that it may not necessarily be accepted.

Which is you have to learn to be flexible and accept the fact that there are always going to be people who are better than you, or are better in quotation marks. (M4-4:26)

But there is some acceptance that others will act toward you as you are labelled. Students report that at least that much provides an indication that your negotiation has been successful. This example about one applied professor at UWO demonstrates this point.

Well the way she teaches like she acts, maybe this is the way the best teachers are, but she acts as if you're such a wonderful singer and I think she puts false hopes into people that don't need those hopes of you're being a professional singer. (M4-1:36)

A much more typical approach to the presentation of self comes from this MUN student.

I don't know I guess you sort of (hard question) I think as a musician, I mean the only evidence or whatever you have is what you do I mean the things you do as a musician that's the only way you can sort of evaluate yourself.

### **What do you do?**

Well you go and sing at the concert, you perform or something... (P7:22)

Thus music students seem to set out to collect "points" by systematically associating themselves with those groups that offer status by affiliation. In this way, although students may never be fully able to claim the identity they choose, they can at least claim that they have collected so and so many points toward the awarding of the label by others. It is not too different from the current rage of frequent flyer programmes with the North American airlines presently. The only real difference is that nobody tells you how many points you need for the free trip. That is an acceptance of a normative standard but without any consensus as to the normative scale. But, to continue the metaphor, you can demonstrate that you are a regular customer by revealing just how many points you have collected. This may imply a number of paradigms for the substantiation of an identity as a musician. While there is an element of a time-serving model, suggestive of status passage (Glaser & Strauss, 1971) where the student moves from some perception of level to level, this is quickly countered by an otherwise apparent quantitative model more in line with the "frequent flyer" paradigm. There does not appear to be any threshold nor particular boundaries and this seems to be one of the major causes for the continuation of the search for identity validation. This may be partially explained by the apparent lack of consensus in the construction of the definition of musician. While it may be possible to demonstrate instances where a student claimed an identity on the basis of a time-serving model, often linked to a sponsorship, there is every likelihood to disprove this as a theory which can be applied in other instances to account for social action. The

apparent social rule is that the identity as a musician in the music school cannot be fully validated and that this, in fact, leads to the continuation of the students' quest to do so, and this despite the accumulation of clues from whatever paradigm might be suggested. The apparent ability for a single "act" to validate only part of the construct of musician may further complicate the "stickiness" of the label since during the process of identity construction, opportunities for the support of the various components of the musician identity may not be equally distributed and therefore parts of the identity complex may be in need of support when none is available. There may not be, in some instances, any substitute for these opportunities not otherwise available.

In this way, knowledge about an individual gained from other clues such as information presented by Person to Other for the purpose of making Other aware of Person's activities is as likely to be as valuable as first hand information where Other may observe Person directly. For example, it would be impossible for any of my students to have attended all the many concerts that I sang in Europe long before they were at university. It would also be impossible for many to attend concerts that I presently do in locations removed from the city where they attend university. Thus students who claim that it is important for faculty to perform are usually content to know that the faculty member is performing and not consider it necessary to attend. This seems most like what Hargreaves (1972:37-55) describes under "attribution processes". He writes (p.37) that "on the basis of the inferences he makes about Other, Person tends to attribute certain qualities to Other". Thus some members of faculty are able to collect these "status" points in a similar way as students do as members of the music school but through attribution rather than through direct observation on the part of students. The relative status of faculty members is

important because of the apparent reciprocity of esteem of teacher and student in the music school (Kingsbury, 1984:117). Faculty typically have more opportunity to collect points beyond the boundaries of the university by giving concerts "outside" and thus rely perhaps more on attribution than students with respect to the gaining of status points through performance. These outside performances include live concerts as well as radio performances and recordings. This student challenges her own assessment that performing by faculty is not important to her.

**Let's make it a black and white question. Is it important to you that your private teacher perform?**

Yes.

**Why?**

Because they can pass on that experience to you, you have to do an awful lot of performing when you're in the music department and it's a really different experience. If they haven't done an awful lot of it, how are they going to teach you how to cope with it, how to deal with it, what to expect.

**What happens if they did it 15 years ago?**

Well that would be okay.

**Oh in other words, it doesn't matter if they're performing?**

At the time that their teaching?

Yea

Okay just a second and let me think. Well obviously I never went to hardly any of their recitals so I guess it's not that important to me. (V1:21)

Her initial response, that it is important, confuses her initially because it is incongruent with the apparent evidence that it may not be so important because she did not attend the concerts. This demonstrates clearly however that the "knowledge" that the performance occurred is what this student needs to have, and thereby she is able to attribute the status to the teacher. Thus she can state that it is important to her that her teacher perform while at the same time not feel it necessary that she attend the concert. Faculty members appear to make use of this process of attribution because they seem able to accumulate many status points by giving concerts elsewhere. Students seldom have these opportunities but where they do, the identity as a musician is strengthened substantially. In fact, students, in the UWO lounge, often openly referred to the value to them of having "outside" concerts.

Faculty are attributed with status points by the students for academic degrees in music as well. While this only happens inside the academic world, the public school system included, it is nevertheless often important for students to see the requisite number of "letters" for members of faculty. In fact, the very position of university instructor appears to carry a substantial number of status points alone for some students.

Well he still knows a lot more than I do. He can only help me.  
He's obviously got to be a good teacher or he wouldn't be  
employed by the university. (M1-8:13)

Reference to various degrees and the number of them and the institutions that awarded them was a constant topic of discussion during the interviews. Not surprisingly so in light of the fact that the interviews were with people who had

chosen the degree route to musicianship. Some students were excited by the number of degrees while others were disappointed that this was the only way to assess the faculty's knowledge.

What the students appear to use more than any other formal validation of their standing as a musician is the external examinations offered by the Conservatories. A typical expression of validation is as follows.

Began studying music somewhere in the middle grades  
beginning with piano going through the Royal conservatory.  
Obtained grade eight piano conservatory, I believe grade two  
or grade three theory (A4:1)

The Conservatory levels are important both as a source of validation and as a indication of agreed upon "levels" of difficulty. Thus when students indicate that they have "grade 8", this implies an agreed level of accomplishment. The highest level accorded by the Conservatories that the students appear to take into consideration is the ARCT or A.Mus., depending on the Conservatory. This is considered by some students as the graduation requirement for the university. While the actual Conservatory graduation certificate was, in fact, for a long time at UWO the officially applied standard, this has long been removed and the actual standard appears to vary considerable from instrument to instrument and from institution to institution. However, reference to the Conservatory is still entrenched at UWO and in its Academic Calendar (1987-88:179) it states for example that "applicants must demonstrate a performance level of at least a Conservatory Grade X standard". This is the admission requirement for the Bachelor of Musical Arts (Performance) programme. There are scattered references throughout the Calender to various

Conservatory requirements including the graduation requirement that states that "all students must reach a minimum of the Associate level in performance in their applied area" (p.178). This student explains her own position.

Also my piano level went up a grade. They ask for a grade 10 here so I played two 10's and an AR piece. But I think it's more the quality because I've seen here people playing 9's and if you play them well, they're looking for potential. That's what they tell you. (M1-3:4)

These standards are not fixed to the extent that all students agreed as to the level required. All instrumentalists are typically required to demonstrate some piano proficiency. This requirement is usually demanded by the theory programme to provide the skills needed to play scores and theory assignments. While a more useful approach for music education students might be functional piano skills that included vamping and other "by ear" chording skills that are needed in the classroom, the requirement, however, is typically set by the theory professors rather than by the music education professors.

This confusion as to the expected requirement is only important in that it shows that while a standard is expected, it is an internal standard and not an external one. Because the internal standard cannot be fixed with any certainty by the students, they try to equate it to the external Conservatory standards which they appear to better understand. These examples demonstrate this. The first student claims that grade 8 is required for piano proficiency.



**Take your average trumpet major in the music department probably can't play piano either.**

Oh yes they can. They have to reach a Grade eight proficiency level in order to graduate from university with a Bachelor of Music Degree. (E6:6)

This next student, also from U of A, claims that Grade 6 is required.

I was working down town so I thought I would take some piano lessons, that sort of thing cause my piano is not, it's pretty poor actually so and I knew that you needed I think a grade six level piano after your second, by your second year in the B.Mus. program so I though alright, I'll take that, work on piano (E2:2)

The next most frequently related claim an identity as a "musician" was from successes in the local and area music festivals. In fact, most students claimed to have won their local festivals. Students who had not participated in these felt at a disadvantage in the community.

I think just because I assumed that everybody who went to the faculty would have won lots of competitions in their major and I hadn't won any and things like that. I knew I had a lot of faults in my own playing, it was mostly in my piano abilities that I felt the least able. (A1:10)

A more typical response would be as follows.

I had always done well at festivals and stuff like this and I was always the person to accompany the choirs (V7:5)

Some students had not competed in these festivals as solo performers but in school groups. Where the group won, the individuals were quick to claim the status points for themselves by affiliation in the absence of their own individual wins.

Well when I was in the program I could just tell from other people at other schools when I talked to them and then they'd say well we do this and I say well really we do this and this and this and they were really surprised and also when we were in festivals and such we always won so that's how we sunk them.(M4-6:5)

At MUN, the local music festival was used to demonstrate the possible incorrectness of the definitional superiority of the performance major. Inside the music school, performance majors claimed this status advantage, but in the uncontrolled situation at the festival, the music education students could openly compete to disprove this superiority and subsequently disallow the status claimed by the performance majors.

**And you can't put your finger on any sort of examples that would lead you to believe that.**

Well they want to be identified with that group so ....you know....they enter all the festivals with them, hoping to beat them or whatever. I don't know...just sit and discuss their pieces whatever and try to seem like they... (P1:15/6)

Few students could get many significant performing opportunities outside the institution and therefore the festivals remained the most obvious source of external

validation of their claim on the "musician" identity. Occasionally students got to perform with the local symphony. This was more common at MUN than at the other institutions since the Newfoundland Symphony is mostly an amateur group whereas the symphonies in Vancouver, London and Edmonton are viewed as professional. Nevertheless, an occasional student did make it into these organizations and in one instance reported to this investigator, the student won the orchestral seat from his own teacher at the university. Validation occurred by virtue of an orchestral chair. Some students of the organ held church jobs which students used to garner status points within the music school. Participation in outside ensembles such as Jazz Choirs that travelled to events such as Expo, the world's fair in Vancouver were reported as indicators of status point accumulation. Almost any event or acknowledgement that such an event had occurred was taken into consideration. Reports that someone had performed on the radio were given. Reports that pictures had been published in the newspaper were given. Reports of participation in "musicals" external to the university were offered. Reports that posters seen around campus and town were considered. Reports that recordings had been pressed were also presented.

It is important to note that only positive indicators are reported to the community about these external events. In some situations, students participate in the local festivals and lose. This can be the source of considerable trouble for the student wishing to develop a strong sense of musician identity. Occasionally the source of the loss is attributed to another insider and that can soften the blow sometimes. When the music student loses to an "outsider", the situation is more serious. Then the only course of action is to try and dismiss the importance of the event altogether.

I'd only be led if I wanted myself to be led, and I think, I don't think I've ever had anybody say "You are just fabulous WOW", but I have had people say that "if you do this, you would be much better and if you work on this you will be much better and you'll promise, if you do this, right so I mean I don't feel like someone saying Oh you're just fabulous, you know you're going to be an opera singer because nobody has ever said that to me.

**Who's telling you that you're terrible?**

Well, you have things like festival that you participate in and you have outside forces telling you that but not that I value that very much. (P7:24)

Inside the music school, much of the validation appears to be accomplished by reference to affiliations. This has been discussed at some length before but students do use the status points attributed by affiliation for their claim on a successful negotiation. Do you study with the best teacher? Do you play in the best ensemble? Do you have the right instrument? Are you playing the most difficult pieces? Are you playing principal chair? The correct answers to these validate one's claim on identity. It is the quest for this identity that drives the music school and there is one particular report in the transcripts that shows the extent of the shock when a faculty member of a music school shows his contempt for this quest on these definitional terms and sells his instrument, not to be replaced but simply to acknowledge that he intends to perform no more.

I remember we used to be shocked when we'd hear professors who had sold their horns...

Oh well just that he was the example of somebody who had sold his clarinets as, of course he was never going to play them again, oh it was simply, oh gee, imagine being a professor of music and not playing; in those days that was just a shocking thought... (V14:21/22)

By way of summary the reader has seen that an individual's concept of self is inadequate (Perinbanayagam, 1985) without a situated interactional context through which an identity can be constructed. Stone (1970) claims that identity is largely established by others on the basis of what Actor appropriates or announces for himself. The term "musician", like Harré and Secord's (1972) account of the term "coward", shows that these "labels" come to provide expectations about the social actions that Actors are likely to perform and that these "labels" serve as a model for the "progressing" (Perinbanayagam, 1985) nature of the identity. Students appear to have to re-establish their musician identity in the music school despite having made such a claim to secure entrance in the first place and students who attempt to survive in the music school with a strong "discrepant role" (Goffman, 1959) seldom are seen by the students as "survivors". Thus the situational context for the successful construction of a music school "musician" appears to be very important. Becker's (1963) suggestion that Sancho Panza's reality may be transferred into the new music school situation shows that what counts as "reality" clearly hinges on the situational context. Rubington and Weinberg's (1973) idea of a "deviant corridor" show that the musician may be able to exit this corridor through one of the side doors before achieving his identity totally. This underlines the apparent perception that "musician" is not viewed nor socially acted upon as a "once-and-for-all" social category but rather as a "label" for which individual "acts" support certain segments of the social construction. Some components can be adopted by individuals like Sennet and Cobb's (1973) "badges of identity". Faculty members in particular can apparently use musical performances exterior to the music school in this way. Thus the reader is returned to Cohen's (1985) notion about "invisible boundaries" with respect to the social construction of a

musician identity. Students admit to a powerful impact of the perception of others which is consistent with Becker's (1963) theory of the power of association with organized groups. Students admit to using a normative standard when "labelling" others and point out that this normative standard is not necessarily accepted by the person being labelled. Thus we read of students who are "better in quotation marks". Points (Goffman, 1959) are collected as an indicator of successful identity construction but with a consensus as to a normative scale. Some students make a "time-serving" model important in their construction of a musician identity but there appears to be general agreement that "knowledge" about individuals is a legitimate way to support the labelling of others. Thus Hargreaves' (1972) and Heider's (1958) theory of attribution forms an important strategy for students to claim a musician identity. The students seek external validations which can be transmitted as "knowledge" about them inside the music school. Thus winning at various music festivals or taking external Conservatory examinations, taking church organist jobs or playing in the city symphony become sources of "knowledge" about individuals which on this implied normative point scale (Goffman, 1959) seem similar to the point gathering strategies by affiliation within the music school.

The students appear to compete openly for the few rewards that offer the validation on their claim. It is to the notion of competition that we now turn.

## Notes for Chapter Ten

1. This is simply to differentiate sociological performance as a social Actor from the musical performance as a musician.

2. quoted in Perinbanayagam (1985)

3. from Small (1987)

4. Goffman (1959:145) writes that "perhaps the most spectacularly discrepant roles are those which bring a person into a social establishment in a false guise". There are music students who participate in the music school community without any acceptance of the norms and values of such a normative reference group. They often have no interest in the musical values of the community, such as the disguised "rocker" but have the performance skills to enter and succeed in the music school because they are aware of the fact that to be a school music teacher, one must have this degree in music first. Many of the students report that these fully discrepant individuals seldom survive and that they typically leave after a couple of years. Interestingly enough, many students admit to not sharing the music school's limited definition of "music". There must be factors which determine how far removed from the community's values and norms an Actor can be before he loses his balance inside the community and finds himself unable to continue.

## Challenges to the Claim on a Musician Identity

Thus far the reader has been presented with a view of the music education student trying to construct an identity as a musician, where among other things it has been suggested, (1) that the identity is conferred by Others as they relate to the identity that he "appropriates for himself or announces" (Stone (1970:399) and (2) that many of the social strategies that these students use to make such appropriations and announces for "presentation" (Goffman, 1959) to Others are "acts" in the express manner of the drama metaphor developed by Goffman (1959). These strategies take into account the social situation and involve the use of "props" such as music books, instruments, conducting batons, clothing, and in "face-to-face" announcements to build "social knowledge" in the attempt to garner a positive societal reaction to their claim.

The analysis may therefore be incorrectly seen to fall into the same camp for which Goffman himself has been criticised. In a attempt to counter these criticisms, Giddens (1987:113) writes,

Goffman is thus held to portray an amoral social universe, in which everyone is busy trying to manipulate everyone else. But this is far removed indeed from the main thrust of his writing...If day-to-day social life is a game which may be on



occasion turned to one's own advantage, it is a game into which we are all thrust and in which collaboration is essential.

It is specifically to this appraisal of these "dramatic" social "acts" that this next section turns its attention. Thus far, it may seem as though students merely produce their little social plays and their success in the construction of a musician identity is assured. The reader may have come to believe that these strategies, as "obvious" as they may seem to the observer, always work. They do not! Thus many students find that they are not at all successful in establishing a claim on this musician identity as they have constructed it and some simply "fail" at validating their claim at all.

In order for a grounded theory to "fit" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), it must take account of classes of social action which might be explained by the theory and yet, because students who are engaged in social episodes using the strategies that the theory has unearthed can still be unsuccessful, the theory appears not yet to be fully unpacked. If the analysis were to rest at this point, the reader might wrongly presume that social action in the music school might be best explained by focusing on the "presentation" strategies that the music education students appear to employ. While these strategies are important, it is precisely because they often "fail" that the analysis must also attempt to account for this "failure" and to examine exactly what it is that these fairly generally used strategies fail at doing. That which appears to be central is not the "presentation" (Goffman, 1959) nor the "announcements" (Stone, 1970) but the **"ratification by significant others"** (Foote, 1951 [1970:484])<sup>1</sup>.

## A Competitive World

This "ratification" does not go unchallenged. Music education students have a view of the social world in the music school as one which is very "competitive" and one of the most puzzling enigmas about the music school students was this constant reference to "competition". Kingsbury (1984:11) writes about his encounter in the conservatory by acknowledging an "ever present weave of intensely competitive social relationships". In fact this expression of "competition" is so pervasive, it would make an interesting "test" to place a forced choice answer in front of music students to see whether they would choose "musical" or "competitive" if asked to represent their view of the music school. While it is true that there are "real" competitions for obvious rewards of scholarships, awards and trophies as well as entrance to particular schools, ensembles and chairs inside those ensembles, it hardly seems to account for the preoccupation music students appear to have with the impression that they are in a very intense "competitive" environment. Music is, of course, in one sense a very competitive field. There are always many more aspirants to a performing position than can possibly be accommodated. Students are certainly aware of this from first hand experience often before even coming to the university.

### **So sort of competitive by nature then?**

No I think they recognize that, especially in the performance, that music is a competitive field and it may or may not be their nature to be competitors but by training in this field you have to be a competitor (V5:16)

Whether that is necessary depends in large measure whether one is able to define "musician" differently than just a "performer", that is, an executionist. But since the music school seems to define "musician" in this way, the music education student appears to have very few opportunities to develop a personal interpretation which is substantially different. There are, of course, those students who develop what Goffman (1959:123-46) calls "discrepant roles" both by employing a strategy of bored acceptance and/or by employing a strategy of overtly defying the team's performance. In this case they do so by constructing a substantially opposing definition for "musician". Seldom, however, do students appear to enter into such overt defiance of the generally accepted standard. When they do, students report that they usually quit the music school. Nonetheless, many do make an attempt to develop a strategy which accommodates the general trend while at the same time attempting not to engage in the overt competition. They do, however, become aware of, and freely report, the pressure to do so.

It was the first thing I noticed here was the sense of competitiveness, and I don't like it at all. The ensembles they place you in go up this week, and I don't care where I am as long as I get to play somewhere the rest is up to me. And everyone makes such a big deal out of it because if you get stuck in symphonic band your not worth anything. And as far as I'm concerned every player that's here is worth there salt anyway in the very beginning. (M3-1:12)

Some students believe that being competitive is acceptable so long as it is not excessive. However this report from UWO shows that moderation was not the experience of this student.

People weren't too friendly; there wasn't a very, it wasn't a friendly atmosphere it was very competitive which I didn't like. But I do like competitiveness and I think it's necessary but not. I thought it was too competitive.

**What's the competition?**

Who's better, like everyone in this thing.

**Better what?**

Better at the instrument that you have played.

Okay.

And I thought it was too competitive. (M3-3:20)

In fact, the whole milieu is perceived as one which is competitively driven. There are, as pointed out before, real competitions such as the Music Festivals. Many students compete in these and it is often reported that they do so "for the money"<sup>2</sup>. But sometimes these music students do not win. When this occurs as a result of "competition" from within the music school, there is often a particular focus as to the cause and the "blame" is directed toward a better performer in the music school. In this case, reported next, the student who was blocked from winning built her case around the presence of one other particular student.

I mean sure lots of people envy us. I suppose envy is a natural feeling. She is a fabulous performer and she definitely worked hard for it, nobody could work any harder. That girl slaved and she was a beautiful player, but she still did carry this air of superiority and I consider myself pretty good on vibes. I pick up on what people think. Pretty dead on most of the time and I know there are people who have had problems with [Sue] that never really left. [Mary] is one of them. She... this festival thing has been a big problem for [Sue] and [Mary].... she could never win the concert-group because [Sue] was always there in

her way. [Sue] is gone this year and she still didn't win and I don't think she can deal with that at all. (P9:27)<sup>3</sup>

The other feature that music students report seems to be the inevitability of this "competition". Whether you wish to compete or not, the music school will place you in a position where it must be addressed<sup>4</sup>. This report from Vancouver shows this situation from the student's first entrance to the music school.

I don't know. It's just the atmosphere that's there, it's a really competitive atmosphere. I can't explain where that originated from all I know is that when you walk in there and somebody asks you well who do you have for a private lessons teacher, oh [Peter], who's that. You know, immediately oh you must not be that good if you're not studying with [Jess Smith], he only takes the top clarinet players. So I mean, immediately you're being judged, you haven't really opened your mouth and you're being judged, one way or the other. (V1:17)

Some students try to avoid the confrontation of competition by removing themselves from where it is most obvious. They shun the idea that they may be the recipient of such judgments when they have gone.

### **What do you talk about?**

A lot of it .....just off the top of my head....you compare with others playing and your practical abilities and a lot of that...at first....kind of upset me because that kind of puts you in a position where you think, well, if they are calling someone down now and I'm out of the room...what happens...are they saying the same thing about me. So you were kind of ....in the department it seems like you are always in the lime light, you're in the spot light to perform. Even to your friends

because everyone is a critic. They were then and even more so now I think. (P3:5)

This atmosphere appears to permeate the entire interactional process at the music school. This next report comes from MUN.

**What did they talk about?**

I don't know, they were pretty hung up actually the class I was with, it was pretty hung up on who played and how they played and how well they played. Now that has considerably died off in latter years, but there was this big competition sort of head banging thing. (P9:7)

The acceptance into the various performing groups is often seen as competitive prizes to conquer as well. Since each ensemble is viewed by the students as having a place on the hierarchy of status and that the "chairs" within the ensembles add further status opportunities, it is little wonder that such competition takes place. At UWO, for example, the Faculty of Music Singers have a reputation of being extremely competitive with respect to entrance. This, of course, enhances the reputation and the elite nature of the group according to the views expressed by the students. This group has been discussed in several other areas of this analysis and should be well known for the kind of association that it is. This student reports.

The Faculty Singers are an identifiable group.

**Why do people want to get into it so much?**

Because it's the top group to get into it. It's competitive. (M2-2:17)

It was even reported that this musical competitive attitude spilled over into the academic work at the University of Toronto.

Well I know a lot of people there and some of these are horror stories but I know that they are true. Like they had essays where people want to get the top marks and so they rip the pages out of the books so no-one else can get the information. (M2-7:9)

Altogether, the University of Toronto was perceived by music students at UWO as a much more competitive music school than Western<sup>5</sup>. Students who participated in this study at universities other than UWO seldom had much experience with other institutions that might compare to the "knowledgeable" appraisal of the University of Toronto by the UWO students. This next report also typifies the attitude at UWO concerning U of T.

I lived in Toronto so I saw Toronto all the time. They're always pulling their hair out. It's very competitive and I'd visit my friends and people are running all over and screaming and I got here and people were playing Euchre. (M2-7:8)

Many students were against the apparent requirement of competition and stated their objections bluntly. The quest in the interview was to attempt to understand what

the students thought they were actually competing for. In other words, what the prize was. This account from UWO.

To find out where you stand on the pecking order?

**Yea.**

I'm not really to sure, I think it's, I don't know how you can find out how you're on the pecking order around here, a lot of people will talk to various people, like just by.

**Hearsay.**

Hearsay, you try and figure out who's good and who isn't, who's in competition for you, but.

**What's that mean, what are you competing for?**

Nothing, it's stupid, it really is because the only person you should be competing for is yourself, but if there are jobs out there, symphonic jobs, solo jobs, whatever, I guess eventually that's what you're competing for, for you to be the best.  
(V7:16/7)

For an occasional student, graduation provided a wonderful release from the pressure of this competition. This UWO graduate recounts her impressions.

**Is that what it means not to be in music, not practising.**

Yea, partly. Not to have this pressure around the music faculty, the tension and the competition around there. You know it was really good to get away from that. (A10:35)



One must understand that there are very few occasions where a formal competition would arise in the music school. The chairs in any ensemble are usually only selected by audition, if at all, once a year and the remaining few competitions for particular scholarships or chances to perform in the concerto concert or whatever are few indeed. The preoccupation with competition seems difficult to justify by these formal events at all. While there certainly is some competition for entrance to the particular university, this has been shown to be much less a barrier than is suggested by the rhetoric and students' awareness of this competition is stronger once they have been accepted and begin to interact within the music school in any case. All students usually have to participate in some sort of performing ensemble. Thus there may be some desire to belong to a perceived or socially acknowledged "better" group than "worse" but opportunities to do so are available for no more than a week or so during the sorting out process at the beginning of the academic year. On the other hand, the students must live in the music school for the entire academic year as a member of the notorious "Slam Band" or the famous "Faculty Singers". This may account for more of a feeling of competition or at least precipitate an intense desire at the time when these ensembles are organized. Neither of these explanations, however, account for the overwhelming sense of pressure of this competition on an on-going basis.

However, in this situational context it is highly likely that some sort of musician identity will be "forced" (McCall & Simmons, 1978:70) upon the social Actor, that is to say that Others in this symbolic community will label the Actor with their definition of musician in the absence of a claim or announcement (Stone, 1970) to the contrary. The competition appears to be about "Self"<sup>6</sup> and the entwining of "musician" and "Self" in self-perception. The reader is reminded that it is a common assumption among scholars to claim that "a people's music is something that they

*are*" (Elliott, 1989b:12). Thus when the "musician" enters into competition, it is "Self" that is dragged kicking along behind. But in the music school, the social Actor (Self) is placed "in an immediately interactional context" (Perinbanayagam, 1985:197) primarily *as a "musician"*. Social action in the music school seems motivated by the quest to be labelled "musician" and that this particular label is not clearly defined and must constantly be negotiated and subsequently validated, suggests the outcome of competition in the music school seems to be revealed as the essence of "worth" as an individual (Self)<sup>7</sup>. Who stays, plays! Only "musicians" have a place in this social world. If the seeking of that label is seen as being questioned, then the place that a student holds in the social world is threatened along with it. This hint comes from Edmonton.

**And they're better people?**

Yea, and there's such a competition you know, I don't know, they're really into competing; well I guess that's natural in music. (E5:5)

In fact, the competition to determine who is "best" on any given day seems critical in the operation of the music school. It is not an academic matter, it is a musical matter. This explanation from UWO.

**If you're not going to compliment me don't talk?**

Don't say anything you know, but that's really the only competition that I personally am involved with but I know that from other people ..... and just sort of being around. But there is lots of competition that goes on that you know somebody thinks they're better than somebody else and person C doesn't think that person B is better than person A and.

**And what happens, I mean does it get resolved or is it just life here?**

I think there's just life here and if you can accept that, that's fine.

**Do you have a choice though, you mean you really think that's what drives people away?**

I don't really think, I don't think it's bad enough that it drives people away so much. If you had sort of staying power to make it this far I don't think it would drive you away.

**Is the competition that you see only related to performance?**

You mean to performance majors or just performance in general.

**Performance in general, or performance major. I mean where is this competition?**

I would say it's more in the practical side.... in your actual playing ability or singing ability or whatever. I don't think there's so much competition between academics. You know I think that's sort of secondary because it doesn't matter if you're an 95% student or a 13% student you know. If you can play well and you can perform then that's what people see when you go to a concert,... you don't what were your marks in University. You know, nobody cares. What you care about is what you hear. Basically, it is the aesthetics of what you hear.  
(M4-4:28/9)

Occasionally, the judges get it wrong! This results in a social mis-labelling (Becker, 1963) and an apparent violation of the perceived social structure. Students seem to construct an appraised sense of order in their community, a sense of the way things "ought to be". This construct comes from their day-to-day experiences and the observed outcomes of social action. Their own social strategies are selected on the

basis of this growing sense of orderly expectations. McCall and Simmons (1978:64) suggest that "we hold certain expectations toward the occupant of a given position". Thus the Actor's sense of social order is constructed by an amalgamation of these expectations about the way Others are. When the competition is won by the "wrong" person and thereby violating the expectations, that is the sense of social order, there are usually consequences beyond that which would have occurred if the "correct people" had won. In this critical event for example, the student who won the formal competition had displaced another student who had been "winning" the daily competition for the "special" musician award. The account is from the perspective of the formal "winner".

Well it didn't work so I changed teachers. One of the biggest problems I had with her we also had a personality conflict.

**Why is that?**

She always felt that I was never focused enough and she never had confidence in what I had done. My first year I would come in and we did the London Foundation Scholarships ...

**What is that?**

A group of people that through the university make donations and each year we compete. You can enter to compete against other musicians and the panel of judges picks out, at the point, was ten people and each got \$750 scholarships to go toward tuition as long as you're continuing full-time in music here at Western. She was really surprised because I had actually made it into the second round and her little prize students didn't. One of them, you know, the one that she is expecting to didn't so she was rather shocked she nearly fell over when she found out I got a scholarship. It was like "OH".

**Oh what?**

That's a surprise I didn't expect this out of little \*\*\*\*\* the little short stubbly fingers.

**So she actually expressed those things to you?**

Not the stubbly fingers bit but when I stood at her door and told her I had won the scholarship her jaw dropped and it wasn't oh that's wonderful, that's fantastic she goes "really!"

**How dare you!**

Almost because I had taken the scholarship away from the person she felt deserved it. (M4-9:28/9)

This is only one of many instances where the formal evaluations appear to be incongruent with the daily competition expectations. The students make up their own mind as to who ought to be labelled and their position on the status ladder. This report from UWO tells of problems created by the assessment for chairs in an ensemble.

**Is there rivalry here amongst the trumpet players?**

Yea, I would say so. Like the same thing happened with the trumpets with the ensemble auditions.

**What happened there?**

Well some seats got changed around, I don't really know what happened but I know that some people complained and ended up getting in somehow.

**And then bumped people out who had originally got in.**

I'm not really sure how many. (M3-7:12/3)

There are many examples where students reported that they had organized their construct of "reality" and that the labels were already in place [established expectation]. It was important that in real competitions that the "judges" got it right. In this excerpt, the student admits to the predetermined labelling.

**Let me put it another way, is it perceived as a fair contest?**

I don't think so, I think a lot of us knew, we had narrowed it down, who were the favourites of the year or who would, who could possibly win it and even amongst the performance people in the competition. (V7:18)

Not all students, however, saw the level of competition as excessive. A few even wished for more. Where students had presumedly developed perceived realistic goals for themselves in music education while at the same time being able to compete successfully as a very good performer, the music school was apparently a pleasant place to be.

**So then what happened?**

Well this is just a couple of days ago and I haven't heard anything else. But she was very distressed about it and was going to see the conductor.

**So there is open competition.**

Yea there is, I guess I shouldn't have said there isn't any but I don't think there is enough competition. I think competition is healthy and it gets people healthy and gets people motivated. (M3-7:11/12)

It is important to separate the competition described by the students into the two types discussed above. The formal competition for seats in the ensemble, the winner of the concerto competition, the winner of the festival is but one type. Students are occasionally required to compete for some of these and many do so willingly. Progression through the degree programme would not be possible without some competitive activity. On the other hand, students are almost never required to audition for the groups such as the Faculty of Music Singers. And for the record, the "Slam band" is not nearly the horrible experience the students wish to make out<sup>8</sup>. Both the ensemble itself and its conductor are competent.

The second "competition factor" is apparently the preeminent one. It is the force that allows the label to be earned and as a result allows the student to assume his "musician" identity. One must remember that the students would, in most outsider's opinion, be entitled to the label "musician" from the point of admission to the music school. Competition prescribes that the students of the music school work at "musicking" and they are seemingly aware that, in certain situations and under certain definitional conditions, the label "musician" appears not to be conferred without certain difficulties. The successful claim on the musician identity is not taken for granted.

In the next two sections the analysis turns to instances where students feel that their claim to the "musician" identity is threatened, or self-doubt in their "musician" identity becomes apparent and finally to instances where students actually "fail" as a "musician" in the music school and the perceived consequences it has for them.

## Doubt in self-definition

Much has been made of the theatre of presenting oneself to others in the music school<sup>9</sup>. The competition for the right to assume a "musician" identity is a participatory drama that the music school students apparently expect<sup>10</sup> all members to engage in. While many seem to be highly successful, others choose either not to participate, or for reasons to be examined here, are apparently not very successful in their bid to develop a secure identity as a "musician".

In chess terms, some pieces are aggressive and do everything possible to solicit attention. Like in chess, the pieces have their own "value" and while certainly not all pieces are equal, the pawn can still threaten a rook or King. Music students seem to develop social strategies much like those of the chess pieces. Some appear to be very aggressive in staking their claim to a "musician" identity while other social strategies appear to function like "en passant". The pieces simply push on straight ahead and claim what is theirs on passing. Other pieces in the hands of possibly less able players are less fortunate and spend much of their time retreating and regrouping, sometimes only to falter and succumb to the opposition. It is to this last group of music education students that the analysis now turns.

There has been reference made earlier in this report that the entrance audition is seen by students to have social importance aside from the obvious screening of applicants. In fact, some students have made a case that the official reasons given as the screening of applicants may not be entirely necessary at all. But the ability of the entrance audition to build a perceived wall around the social world of the music



school and to demonstrate the perceived importance of the performer to the music school remains apparently vital in the construction of the "symbolic community" (Cohen, 1985). Student applicants see themselves challenged by this entrance audition more by the threat to their self-definition, that is their identity as a "musician", than by the musical demands required of them by the university.

Actually, many music education students reported that they felt "unworthy" for acceptance. Even among the most senior students and graduates this attitude about their admission was common. Thus clearly, the sense of perceived "incompetence" or "lack of worth" was ill-founded in practice but nevertheless "real" to the students. It might be fruitful to examine a few of these expressions of doubt about "getting in". The first account comes from a first-year UWO student.

**So what happened when you were accepted here?**

I was happy, I was surprised. I didn't think I'd get in first of all. (M1-5:5)

The next report focuses the attention on the requirement for the performer. Here the expression centres on the speakers' impressions of ability.

I didn't really know if my chances were very good because from what I understood of the selection process, it was mostly due to proficiency on your instrument--keyboard in my case - - and I didn't think I was that good but I knew my marks were good enough to get in so I guess I was sort of surprised when I did make it. (P1:1)

Another MUN student recalls her "fears" were severe enough that she avoided applying during her first year at university.

**Let's talk now about getting into university in the first place. Why did you choose music?**

I didn't at first. I did a year of General Studies. I had gone through High School telling everyone that music was what I was going to do and when it came down to the crunch I really had too many qualms about it first off to go right into it. I had a lot of fears as to what exactly it was I wanted to do, so I didn't bother with it the first year.

**What kind of fears did you have?**

I wasn't sure if I was good enough. That was one of the big things. (P3:1)

It is important to remind ourselves at this juncture that these students must bring a substantial performance accomplishment to the audition<sup>12</sup>. These same students would have had many opportunities to assess their competence as "musicians" and in almost every case would be the "star" from their own area. They would be the soloist in the school band, the winner of the local festival, or the best performer in a private teacher's studio<sup>13</sup>. It would perhaps be a challenge to find this "fear" among students entering university in any other field where, typically, no special previous ability, other than perhaps academic, seems required for entrance.

Once accepted, students must face the possibility that they may not successfully compete for their "musician" identity inside. This senior at UWO reports.

You could get in but then when you get here and you know you see so many people are better than you are or what you

presume is better than you are. It's I suppose it's a little ego shattering and if you really had your heart set on performing and you couldn't get into performance. (M4-4:26)

Aside from such "formal" failures as suggested above, much of the threat to one's identity appears to come from a failed negotiation with oneself<sup>4</sup>. Contrary to the opinions of others, some students insist upon questioning the validity of their claim on the "musician" identity.

I wanted to be in music but I just didn't think I was good enough and a friend of mine.....

**What would give you that idea?**

I don't know. I have no idea, my music teacher did nothing but praise all of us and I just didn't think I was good enough. (A7:5)

Self appraisal plays an important part in one's claim on the identity. This doubt is not simply "being down on oneself" but more a reflexive perception of reality as seen in the music school situation. Part of the apparent inability to trust the labelling by others rests perhaps with the students' uncertainty as to who has the social authority or who they judge to be significant to assign the label and thus confer an apparent right to the identity within the music school. This may explain the seeming insecurity by the applicant to the acceptance of the opinion of other outsiders. This next report comes from a student who is required to perform a vocal solo in class, something less than would otherwise be desired.

**What do you think of singing a solo next week?**

Oh I'm not liking it. I think I'm the worst singer in that class,  
I really do. (M1-3:14)

Regardless of where one turned, the students were challenged to face themselves and assess their own chances at developing a secure identity as a "musician". Not everyone succeeded.

**Why should their performance be so important to you?**

I don't know....it just the attitude over there. To me it wasn't personally, I tried my best but I knew I could never measure up to that. (P1:5)

In fact, the whole process of reflexive perception uses "self" as "other"<sup>15</sup>. It compares what "self" sees "other" capable of achieving and not achieving. It steps outside oneself to view "self" in comparison to everyone else around. This account from MUN demonstrates this well.

I was afraid of a lot of things. Like ....I remember specifically going into the music building when I wasn't there.....in my first year....just to check out the place and see what was going on. I remember watching people coming out of a conducting exam and saying...My God, I'll never be able to do things like that. You know, and the initial thing was a fear that I couldn't measure up to what the other people were doing. But, I don't know, the initial reaction when I got in there was....a lot of hard work. (P3:2/3)

After assessing the music school standard, this student just "figured" that she was not as good as the next person. Notice that this assessment is made on performing prowess alone.

Well, from being around for a year in the Music Department, I could hear everyone else.....

**Everybody else what? Playing?**

Playing and talking and everything else and just figured well I'm not as good as they are so it must be based on that. (P1:2)

Once again it must be shown that it is the "performance" criteria that are assessed here<sup>16</sup>. It is the "musician" qua "performer" that is threatened.

The whole performance sort of side of things has been basically kind of frightening to me but I think that's a fear of not being ...well I think that's a fear of my own perceived skills or abilities. (P2:13)

There are frequent student accounts of "self-fulfilling" failures<sup>17</sup>. Students often expected that their performances would not be acceptable to themselves or others and when this came to pass, blame was often strapped upon their own shoulders. Not unexpectedly, others reacted to them as the failures they perceived themselves to be. This excerpt comes from a graduate of UWO.

...when we had masterclasses, and I was playing in front of my peers, I knew my talent as a pianist and I would make that comparable to somebody who could play repertoire twice as difficult as mine and I would be embarrassed that I would be playing something so simple. I would get so nervous and I'd get half way through it and I would know it by heart and blank,

and then the next time I would play I'd think, << Oh my God, I hope that's not going to happen again like last time >> And of course it does and this goes on and on. (A11:19/20)

Another example of this reflexive condemning comes from Vancouver where this UBC graduate recalls how his perception of himself got in the way of his acceptance into the group as a "musician".

I think a lot of it depends on your own self-esteem<sup>18</sup>. If you believe that you are a shitty player and always going to have those clarinet players turning to you and saying you played that wrong, you're flat, you did this wrong, when are you ever going to practice. You always have that nagging in the back of your mind. If you begin to believe that you're a poor player but the professor still talks to you, you will believe that you are being tolerated, not accepted, just tolerated. That happened in band, in band that happened to me I'd say. (V1:11)<sup>19</sup>

The perceived requirement of the music school to expose one's "musician" self caused constant comparisons to be made. In almost every performing situation with others, students seem to perceive an opportunity and often a requirement, to examine how one fared against others nearby. If you own little "error" became the focus of your attention, as it typically does to the performer, then it is often possible to build the comparison from the perspective where that minor "error" takes on an overweighted position in the equation. One's own skill is often diminished, not by competence on the task at hand, but by intimidation. A not uncommon gesture during the warm-up time at ensembles is for the students to demonstrate the latest learned instrumental pyrotechnic consisting of very high notes or extremely fast runs. Students even went into practice rooms to "warm-up" for the ensemble "warm-up"

thus enabling a secure chance at the display of technical superiority. Many students were threatened by this.

**What did you think about that?**

You are intimidated. You can't go anywhere without being intimidated here (M3-6:2)

In the ensembles, students sit side by side with peers and comparisons are difficult if not impossible to avoid<sup>20</sup>. Some students gained a feeling of insecurity about their own playing in this way as this account relates.

I remember my first year in Symphonic band here trying to read that music and then these new people beside me going through it and reading it and I know it's the first they've seen it too. And they're going through it like it's nothing. (M4-5:16)

Other students found that in their private lessons, teachers would compare them to other students. This often would soften one's claim as a "musician".

**Let's talk about your private teacher now. Why are you switching?**

Well, I took from \*\*\*\*\* last year and she has a lot of performance majors and they seem to have first priority and I didn't really like being compared to these other people. I'm more....like I'd like to be compared to myself in my private lesson. (M2-1:10)

The consequence for this last student was to change teachers.<sup>21</sup> Music education students also reported that other opportunities to have their claim as a "musician" challenged were simply avoided. Thus, if no points could be won for positive claim, the avoidance assured the students that at least no points would be lost by a negative experience.

**So your feelings of inferiority as a musician have kept you from participating in their sort of, student recitals and things.**

Yes... (P1:10)

Other students found that switching their major performing instrument was required to alleviate the doubt in their self-definition.

So he said well you know work on it over the summer and so when I came back for second year I had like two lessons and I just broke down and I started crying and I said I can't do this. And he said well are you sure, and I said yes, I'm really sure, I can't do it. And just, when I told him that it just felt like you know a whole .....the flood gates just sort of opened because I was just so relieved that I finally admitted to myself that I wasn't really cut out to do this. And I went and spoke to the applied chairman and she said well you have to do an audition for the piano (M4-4:15)

Another common situation which resulted in feelings of doubt about oneself as a "musician" resulted from applied teachers' perceived expectation. Often these expectations were seen to be unreasonable or exaggerated to intimidate the student. Students always checked with the other students to develop an apparent "community



standard" for the level of expectation as well as exact requirements. But life in the studio was not necessarily ameliorated by this knowledge. This example from a UWO graduate is not unusual.

...every lesson he told me "You're going to fail, you're going to fail, you're not up to first year technical standards" and me with my mouth, "why was I accepted, why was I accepted?" "Do it again." Answer my question, and I'm sure that for one lesson, Monday morning at 8:30, and he didn't show up. I was happy, I was sitting outside his office crying actually because I was so tense. He made me so tense, I just couldn't function at all. (A7:6)

Here it is important to reiterate that the impact of this episode is from the student's perception rather than just as an acceptance of the teacher's analysis. This is most obvious because this is a historical reconstruction of reality and one notes the logical progression of social episodes to enable the student to elaborate the point she wishes to make. Of course, this student is a graduate of the music school and obviously did not fail as the teacher suggested. But the perception of the threat to a musician identity is well reconstructed here and shows the importance of both the apparent necessity to be able to validate one's claim and also the importance of the applied teacher to give support (McCall & Simmons, 1978:70) for this claim. This student demonstrates once again the perceived folly of the entrance audition and its inability to accomplish the task the music school purports it to undertake, once again demonstrating the incongruity between the Actor's perceptions and their socially constructed world and a more "structural" account of the organization itself. If the "standard" which this audition is supposedly established to determine is met, how is

it that the student could be faced with this situation after being admitted? Another UWO graduate tells her story in this account.

And when I started with him, I had a different teacher every year and I only had him my last year, he expected that I know all my scales at a certain speed, really quick, and none of the other teachers that I'd ever had made me do that so it was very difficult to try to pull them up but I would practice very hard, three or four hours a day, trying to get these up, and then I'd get into my lesson, I mean you just can't learn all these scales in a week and when you try and do it you get flustered and I'd get just so frustrated and I wanted to do it so badly and I'd get all nervous about and just screw it all up. (A9:17)

At U of A, several students claimed that their official status as music education students was a severe threat to the possibility that they would be taken seriously as a "musician". Thus situations as the next report occurred with some frequency.

My trumpet, I found, his expectations of my time, his expectations of my need for practice didn't take into account the fact that I was taking five or six courses at the time that were difficult for myself and he expected, like I said, the six or eight hours practice out of me that I didn't have time for and that's where I gained the attitude, to a large degree, that education students were kind of secondary because after my year of lessons in my second year I set my trumpet down for an entire year and didn't play because my attitude was just completely destroyed. He had me thinking that you're not a player, you're not even good enough to play in the concert band and was telling me all these things (E4:19)

This next example is yet another confirmation of the perceived doubt induced by faculty teaching applied instruments at U of A and is important to show that this rather significant social situation arose in the other music schools as well.

Basically you'll get little comments like oh well, you're in education, you know, you don't have to be as good or you know, there's snobbery that exists there. Amongst the faculty I found with piano, many of them I felt have a very narrow focus where piano is concerned. If you're not a concert pianist you're just simply not a good pianist (E7:9)

Students were often confronted with immediate challenges to their claim on the "musician" identity. This student at UWO lasted "one note" at her first singing lesson.

I had a lesson. Well...I was disappointed in myself because the first note I sang;...she said it was wrong. (M1-4:6)

Other teachers were seen to resort to less than positive treatment<sup>22</sup> with respect to comments made about their students' performances. Where the claim as a "musician" is so tenuous at best, students who must endure this type of criticism from those who are for the majority of students a leading source of support (McCall & Simmons, 1978:70), are severely challenged by doubt.

#### **What about your piano teacher?**

I had two piano teachers. The first was incredibly negative towards all her students. That's just her way of teaching. She

uses a lot of criticism and constructive criticism is fine but she would use such negative analogies like < <that sounds like a cow plopping across the piano> > and stuff like that. Uhm...I got very discouraged with her and I found I was playing negatively with her and my piano was getting worse and worse and worse. I dreaded going into her room because I knew it was just going to be an hour of criticism. It was just the kind of criticism that my personality couldn't handle. (A1:18)

Other teachers were seen to generate doubt in students by overtly denying the students obvious activity. In this case, the teacher suggests that the student alter her career, not based on playing prowess, but on some apparent whim that the girl had a way with words.

But I'm growing that's how I grow as a musician, it took time.

**Everything does.**

Yea. She was convinced that I should become a journalist.

**Who?**

My teacher.

**What teacher?**

My piano teacher.

**Here?**

Yea. She goes "oh you have such a way with words you should become a journalist and write music critiques". Great I'm in performance, I was supposed to be playing the piano and she wants me to become a journalist ... really funny. (M4-9:23/4)

This is particularly troublesome where, as in the case of the "musician", the self-esteem (Downey, 1977) of the individual is based on the ability to fulfil that role. Often the person who stakes his aspirations on this identity seeks support for this role-performance at whatever cost to other more possibly "realistic" goals, whether they are their own or those of others. Even in situations where these other goals may be expressed by teachers in an honest and open way to encourage students to look elsewhere in the face of likely failure to succeed, the doubt raised can be perceived as destructive enough to precipitate the failure, thus establishing the efficacy of the self-fulfilling prophecy. Because the standards against which the students must measure themselves are seen by the students to be apparently set by the music schools themselves, this same music school, represented by both other students and members of faculty, can usually provide sufficient reward for the continuation of the perhaps less appropriate role, that is as a "musician". Students who seem less able to compete for the limited rewards available make the option of taking one's distance from the role more likely. Goffman's notion of role-distance plays an ever increasing part in the life of the less able to compete music student. But as Goffman (1961:105) points out,

A flustered failure to maintain either kind of role poise makes the system as a whole suffer. Every participant, therefore, has the function of maintaining his own poise, and one or more participants are likely to have the specialized function of modulating activity so as to safeguard the poise of others.

Thus there is a perceived incredibly strong pressure brought to bear upon students who, once having attained some measure of identity with the "musician" role, and

having received even a modicum of social reward for its performance, find that escape seems impossible. The reciprocal is also true. In this case, the "individual tries to isolate himself as much as possible from the contamination of the situation..."(Goffman, 1961:110) such as having to participate in the acknowledgement that he does in fact have sympathies toward the stigmatised role as an educator or for some reason prefers not to seek the performer's identity.

In situations where the music education students are typically seldom asked to demonstrate themselves as an occupant of a social role, eg. as a teacher, there also seems to develop little need for social support for this role-identity. McCall and Simmons (1978:81) state it thus,

Those identities most in need of support are more likely to be acted upon, for we strive always to legitimate our conceptions of ourselves.

Thus reciprocally, the music education students who perceive the situation in such a way that they see themselves constantly being asked to demonstrate themselves in their "musician" role, apparently need to find resolution through "support" for this identity as a "musician". It is a social process to obtain and maintain this identity. It becomes patently obvious that where students are required to act as "musicians", they are likely to want to legitimate the most idealized version open to them.

As stated before, the perceived ability of the institution to establish the standards by which the person can judge his role-performance, makes it unlikely that he will not receive the necessary role-support by the Music School in whose apparent self-interest this legitimation rests. Students who simply withdraw from the race, that is even

before developing a "discrepant role" (Goffman, 1959), pay an enormous price for their autonomy. It is here that the most damaging level of doubt in self-concept is developed. Once the identity as a "musician" has been achieved and freely acknowledged by tutors and peers, the withdrawal of this support seems crushing.

For the most part, students who have their musician role-identity threatened by loss of role-support from an important audience, such as peers or tutors, experience "misery and anguish" (McCall and Simmons, 1978:98). This can apparently be somewhat overcome, or at least diminished by the overvaluation of what few rewards are left. Thus, personal bonds, and simple norms of propriety and polite discourse usually ensure that sufficient representatives of significant others will offer rewards in quantities large enough to ensure the continuation of the fantasy. The role-performance can be personally judged as successful and the idealized self is once again freed from threat. However, this problem can be made more difficult for students who define significant others more narrowly and subsequently it is much more difficult for that person to find satisfactory role partners from which these limited rewards might be obtained. One interviewee who was in exactly this situation where her musician identity had been severely threatened and who was looking for the kinds of role-performance rewards discussed above shows the kinds of limits that she imposed.

Practically, I think I do pretty well for myself as a musician.  
Then again I haven't got an awful lot to compare with here in  
my instrument. (P3:12/3)

This same student describes the perceived threat to her identity as a musician.

...it had me questioning the people who were telling me...who were profs....all along that, you know, you are doing super well, your performing is great. You know, everything seems to be dead on, A's all the way, you should do more performing and it's great, you should studying in the summer time and everything and all of a sudden it was almost like.....forget it! You know, you are not of the par. That really made me stand back and say, look don't fill people's heads with this gibberish if it isn't true and then only to have them hurt in the end. Which I was, because people were firing me up for this for a full year, saying, you know...go on you can do it....but when it came down to the crunch it was.....it was....ah another bit to add to my insecurity....that I thought I was finally over, you know.

**So presumably it was a different bunch of people that were telling you yes than the people who were telling you no.**

That's just it. It was the same people. So then it comes down to the fact that....do you trust anything at all that they have to say to you. So you just don't know where to turn then. I mean....I remember at the end of last year, not knowing what to do. Because, I had myself really fired up for this and, I don't know, I kind of felt cheated that they would talk to me and tell me well, go for it, do as much performing as you can and gear for that and then....oh.....just as an added thought....you are not good enough so, don't worry about it. That to me seems a really cruel thing to do, you know, and the people that said it... (P3:15)

When the doubt that the individual has about his role exceeds the role support that the person can find, from himself and/or others, all claim on the identity as "musician" may be extinguished and the student becomes a "failed musician". It is to this that the analysis now turns.



## The "Failing" Musician

Music education students spend a large part of their schooling lives interacting with others in the music school. They are challenged to call themselves "musicians" and the majority of these students achieve some degree of success at getting the label to "stick". But it has been shown that this "musician" label is apparently defined inside the music school and is applied by members of the music school to individuals who are seen as deserving within the confines of the music school.

As this analysis draws to a close, it is prudent to explore one final area of life in the music school and that is, leaving. Much has been said about the conditions generated upon arrival with entrance auditions to set the stage and both passive and active assessments of one's standing in the music school. It has been shown that students seem able to gain status by affiliating themselves with a variety of ensembles and persons. Individuals and groups within the music school seem to serve as "significant others" and "reference groups" to the students. And most importantly, it has been demonstrated that being labelled a "musician" and thus being able to sustain an identity as a "musician" is perceived by students as the most important quest among the music education students.

When this research began with the pilot study at Memorial University of Newfoundland, the first student to participate in an interview situation was unknowingly the ideal case to unfold the apparent complexity of the suggested theory developed in this thesis. It is with the following words that this first student broke

into tears at the realization that her true feelings had been exposed both to the researcher, and more importantly to herself.

**Is it important to you that you are a mediocre musician in your own eyes.**

Yea. More than I care to admit.

**Is that right. It bothers you.**

Yea! (P1:11)

The drama played out in front of this researcher within the first hour of this project projected fear and excitement. How could such emotion be brewing within a student about studying music in order to become a music teacher? This student had never made claims to herself nor others about performing, and yet, the music school in which she found herself had created an environment that apparently had destroyed the self-worth of an individual who had chosen to become a professional in another, albeit related, discipline.

For the music education major, graduation leads to a profession that often demands many of the same performing "musician" role attributes that many students seek to avoid in the music school. Each music education student must assess his own time in the music school and what that time has meant to him. But the music education student has a door through which he may pass to avail himself of the opportunity to put to good use the many skills and the acquired knowledge and skills that he has as a graduate. Others in the music school community are less fortunate. Some never graduate although they meet the rigorous entrance criteria. Others

graduate in the performance programme, some of these having been encouraged to leave their first choice of music education. A few will go to graduate school and postpone any life decision as to what use they may make of their undergraduate degree in music performance. Even fewer will find some professional use for their education and will find an orchestral job. One or two across Canada will graduate into professional solo careers that will launch them into international stardom. The rest become graduates! Music education students are aware of the influence this has on the schooling leaving time for them. They often comment on these people, many of whom were former music education colleagues.

One graduate of UWO told this researcher that "the most obvious outcome of a performance degree from Western was that you never touched your instrument again". This rather shocking indictment of such a prestigious institution and its degree programme came as a rather significant blow to this researcher, a Western music education graduate himself. Further investigation revealed confirmations at all the institutions. This first account suggests that the love of music that brought the student into music in the first place is transformed merely into work.

**Tell me what you think of this. I was told this recently that the obvious outcome of a performance degree from Western was that you never touched your instrument again.**

I can believe it. (Why) Because people have a resentment built up like I was saying because of the workload and I can believe that was said. I know, I can remember when I was in second year listening to some fourth year people who were graduating and they were saying << we never have to play again if we don't want to, never have to play again >> And they're right. You don't have to. (A10:33/34)

Another student report confirms this.

**Somebody told me recently, one of your immediate colleagues here, that the end product of a performance degree from Western was that you didn't play your instrument again. What do you think of that?**

Really? I've seen it happen, unless they go on to a Masters, and then of course they're playing because it is in literature. I don't understand why they wouldn't keep playing, if they're doing a performance degree. Now I've seen it in 2 people in particular that I know of, that don't touch the piano any more and they've done their degree in performance. (A11:29/30)

Music education students also report the realities of graduating into the audition circuit and failing.

**What happens to them, I mean do they go away mad or just go away or.**

It doesn't happen right away, like they go off with this great exulted imagine of themselves and they go out and they think, okay, I'm going to go to Toronto and I'm going to audition for an ? and I'm going to be great and they show up at the audition and there's five hundred other people there who are just as great as they are. And you know it's kind of like the real kick in the stomach. Right there.

**Then what happened?**

And any object is going to go, kicked back to reality really and I mean most of the people that I knew who were like in my class are not singing at all and they're not involved in music at all. Of any kind. (V10:18)

This student continues by questioning the discontinuance of music altogether. It is acknowledged that music at the professional level is competitive, but can there be no music for the reason that supposedly brought students into the music school in the first instance?

And that tells me there's something seriously wrong with what's going on because I mean sure it is very very competitive and only a few people are going to be up there because it is competitive, the whole performance area, but why did they drop it completely, I mean there's all kinds of community theatre's for singing, there's all kinds of chamber groups, I mean why do you have to be a star, why can't you just be really good at what you do and enjoy it. (V10:19)

Another Western graduate recounts how her friend who was a performance major dispensed with music-making altogether upon graduation.

Oh I'm sure it is. It is, well to some extent, yes it is serious business but if you're not enjoying yourself, my friend that was the flute major, the performance major, she stopped playing her flute as soon as she graduated because it got to be a chore (A7:20)

Where the irony lies is, of course, that music education students are constantly reminded by the "performance majors" that they are in a "dead-end" stream as far as music is concerned. These students who were described above, were the "best". They were the definitionally superior performance majors. Their future in music-making often appears to terminate at graduation. The music education major has the opportunity to provide music-making opportunities for thousands of school students

during his career in the classroom, yet they endure during their time in the music school such suggestions as outlined in this account below.

...there is a girl in the class (we were talking about this one day) and she was saying that she did that. She was saying that she got a lot of flack from peers in the music department. In the sense that they were saying "What are you going to a dead end zone like that for?" You can play this instrument so well "Why don't you go into performing? Why don't you do something else? Why education?". They are very anti-education there. (E6:20)

The last insult that many committed music education students see is the "back-up" educator. It is not uncommon to hear students say that they are taking the education degree as a "back-up" or a "security net" or some other term to suggest that it will provide employment when all else fails. Music education students who are committed and enthusiastic about becoming a music teacher fear the consequences of this act. This last comment by a member of the UWO student population is as explicit as they come about this situation.

Well you know you can't get a job in performance so I might as well go into teaching. That really pisses me off.

**Why?**

Because I think that's a really bad attitude.

**But I've heard the best teacher will be the best musician.**

That may be but just because you can play well on your instrument doesn't mean that you can teach. And a lot of....well some people just say, well I'll just teach and pay my way to perform, like in high school. I don't think that's the way you should go about it. But I guess it's hard if the performance field

is so limited and they want to continue on in music, I guess they have their choice. (M2-6:7)

In fact, the whole process of teacher education seems to demand so little except proof as a performer that it is no wonder that committed music education students resent this kind of attitude. L'Roy (1983:131) quotes one of her interviewees as saying,

If we have to prove our worth as performers every semester in juries, I resent the fact that those who are just in music education for insurance don't have to prove that they can teach.

There is some reason to examine the social processes that may account for the apparent shift in identity from "musician" to "teacher" in terms of Goffman's "On Cooling the Mark Out" (1952). The student who is just reported here as challenging her success as a musician has apparently found a "cooler" in the education programme. She seems to have been unsuccessful in her attempt to secure a positive societal reaction to her claim as a "musician" and has taken a path as ending where, as Goffman (1952:487) writes, "he may withdraw from one of his involvements or roles in order to acquire a sequentially related one that is considered better". In this instance, the student can "cool out" by seeking a new role as "teacher" in the face of apparent defeat as a "musician".

Of course, for the performance major, no such avenue for cooling out seems available. Since this research agenda did not attempt to consider the performance major it is difficult to suggest more than the possibility that the absence of any

cooling-out period might contribute to the often reported abandonment of music performance by graduates in the performance stream. In this instance, the person "may be involuntarily deprived of a role under circumstances which reflect unfavourably on his capacity for it. The lost role may be one that he had openly committed himself to preparing for" (Goffman, 1952:489). In the absence of the music school situation, the performance major may be unable to find a venue for the claim on his musician identity and in the absence of such, may abandon music performance altogether as so often reported in this research. Therefore the music education major has the likely possibility of using his education programme for a period of cooling out in the face of any perceived weakness in a successful construction of a "musician" identity, something the performance major seems not to have at his disposal. To what extent this may be true remains to be answered in another research agenda that takes the performance major as its focus.

Nevertheless, it is obvious that in such related fields of music and music education there will be found persons who are teaching because they are primarily committed to it while others are teaching because they have been unsuccessful as a performer. Goffman (1952:505) concludes his position as follows,

No doubt there are few positions in life that do not throw together some persons who are there by virtue of failure and other persons who are there by virtue of success. In this sense, the dead are sorted but not segregated, and continue to walk among the living.



There are many questions left unanswered. While new information about life in a music school from the perspective of music education students has been systematically ferreted out in this analysis, there is still much to discover.

Do students learn to accept this quest as a "musician" and wish to continue that identity as a teacher in a school. Do music teachers make curricular decisions for their students in their schools in order to provide opportunities for themselves to gain status as a "musician". Is the performance model of a definition for "musician" in the music school the determinant factor in the resistance to curricular change in school music programmes. Could teachers become competent music teachers without becoming a performing "musician"?

The analysis now turns to more theoretical consideration specifically relating to the process of identity construction that has been suggested by this report so far.

## Notes for Chapter Eleven

1. Some students' attempts appear to be completely unsuccessful and they are discussed as "failing musicians" beginning on page 474 in this thesis.
2. Winners are awarded scholarships and the better students can often attract substantial sums of money by winning certain specific classes that have these scholarships attached.
3. Fictional names have been added to avoid confusion.
4. This is consistent with the primary notion accepted into this thesis that "other people demand that one claim some identity" (McCall & Simmons, 1978:70)
5. Most of this impression came from friends who were studying at Toronto.
6. see Blumer, H. "Sociological implications of the thought of George Herbert Mead" in Cosin et al. (1971) School and Society. and Mead, G.H. "The Self" in Worsley, P. (1978) Modern Sociology. Penguin, pp.45-51.
7. Stone, G.P. and H.A. Faberman (eds.) (1970) Social Psychology through Symbolic Interaction. Ginn-Blaisdell. The authors observe "For the sociologist, as with his subjects, the question of motivation does not arise except in those instances where on-going conduct recurrently breaches expectation and motivates a control reaction from others". (pp.467)
8. another omniscient observer comment!
9. see Goffman (1959)
10. McCall & Simmons (1978:70) "if he does not claim some social identity, other people will force one upon him".
11. see Kingsbury's (1984:266) account of "moral worth" and its connection to performing prowess.
12. Kingsbury (1984) also points out that students are selected by the music school as a result of a highly specific set of musical skills.
13. It might be useful to point out that most students who gain admittance to the music school have had some "private" study and students generally do not see their high school programme as substantial enough to make them eligible for music schools. On the other hand, many give credit (or blame) to their high school music programmes (especially the band instrumentalists) for having raised their interest substantially

enough to actually seek entrance. This is a rather unusual situation in universities generally where in other subjects a "good" high school leaving report might be wholly considered adequate for applying to the university.

14. Music education students and faculty often complain that there seldom seems to be any equivalent to the "audition" for the performance stream to give the music education students the same sense of "status passage". Often, in fact, these individuals reported that music education was where one ended up if all other "special" stream entrance requirements had not been successful. It might be suggested that if some perceived significant event could be established to "screen" music education students, then they too might have the same sense of strong status passage afforded to the performance major when he is selected for that stream.

15. see Blumer, H. (1969) Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method. Prentice-Hall.

16. The other notion of the importance of "talk" has been described before. The "talk" is used primarily as a social strategy of displaying "knowledge".

17. see Hargreaves, Hester & Mellor (1975) for a comparison in schematic form of the "self-fulfilling prophecy" model and the "labelling" model. also Rosenthal & Jacobson (1968) for a "positive" self-fulfilling perspective and Rist (1970) for a negative model.

18. see Downey, M. (1977:59) for a discussion of self-esteem & self-concept.

19. Kingsbury (1984:113) reports an account of a student in his study who likewise claims that her inability to join the woodwind clique resulted from her lack of performing skills.

20. In fact, students systematically used this fact to "show-off" in an attempt to gain "points".

21. Kingsbury (1984) reports on the significance of the student-teacher relationship and points out that any dissatisfaction would typically result in a teacher change.

22. Thus "non-supportive" (McCall & Simmons, 1978:70) and thereby not providing the wished for positive societal reaction.

## A Process of Labelling?

The theatre, write Berger and Luckmann (1967:39)

provides an excellent illustration of such playing the part of adults. The transition between realities is marked by the rising and falling of the curtain. As the curtain rises, the spectator is 'transported to another world', with its own meanings and an order that may or may not have much to do with the order of everyday life. As the curtain falls, the spectator 'returns to reality'.

This investigation into the social world of music education students, like the spectators in Berger and Luckmann's theatre, has seen these students lift the curtain on the stage of the music school and themselves progress through stages of arrival as frosh<sup>1</sup> where at UWO they were "sung in"<sup>2</sup> through to their eventual graduation, where the curtain falls. At the heart of the labelling approach, writes Schur (1971:8)

is an emphasis on process; deviance is viewed not as a static entity but rather as a continuously shaped and reshaped outcome of dynamic processes of social interaction.<sup>3</sup>

The reader has seen that these students upon arrival at the music school cannot continue to perform socially as they have in the past because their arrival makes what Schutz (1964:29) has called his "Thinking-as-usual" criteria unworkable. Schutz suggests that this new condition in which the music students find themselves may require that these students must "place in question nearly everything that seems to be unquestionable to the members of the approached group". The task here was then to set out systematically to examine the questions these newcomers came to ask and subsequently act upon in the music school. Concerning this task, Lofland (1978:5) writes,

A basic (and happily practical) sociological question is: What are the techniques by means of which people manage the situations of their everyday lives? Starting from the assumption that no social arrangement simply "is", but must constantly be constructed, what are the unceasingly produced and placed building blocks from which the structures of social life are unremittingly fabricated?

The social processes of these students has since been laid before the reader. Their observations, constructs and social strategies to make sense of the world they find themselves in have been reported in contextualized accounts giving the reader the ability to immerse himself into the social world through the words of the Actors themselves.

The purpose of this analysis was, however, not only to display the contents of this social world but also to develop a "theory" to account for the social action of music education students in the music school. It may be of some use to briefly state just what a "theory" might be. Denzin (1978:47) offers perhaps the shortest definition

when he writes, "Theory is explanation". One might pursue this notion of "explanation" by unpacking it somewhat. Chafetz (1978:2) would have us believe that theory can be described as follows, "Once something is established as existing, theories constitute systematic attempts to answer the general question "why". But "why" is not the only question that might be asked. In fact, "why" may not be very salient at all. The most important "explanation" may have to do with the "how" and Denzin (1978:48) develops his concept more generally by explaining that theory "permits the organization of descriptions, leads to explanations and furnishes the basis for the prediction of events as yet unobserved". This is what the interactionist is best able to offer.

Thus the first task has been to "establish as existing" some patterned social action by music education students within their social world of the music school. Along with a contextualized account of this social action, there has been a systematic attempt to place the social action within generally accepted sociological thought. As the analysis unfolds, the reader is led to see that the "what" that is socially "existing" concerns itself with the processes of students constructing a "master status" (Hughes, 1945) as a "musician". By carefully examining the "what" we eventually turn our attention to the "how". Therefore our question grows more centrally to discovering "how" these students are able to establish an "identity" (McCall and Simmons, 1978) as a "musician" in this social world.

This research is, however, limited to the development of a substantive theory and as Glaser and Strauss (1967:80) write, "Often the substantive and formal theories are formulated by different authors". But one does not begin each analytical exercise in theoretical vacuum, nor is it possible simply to borrow formal theories and show

how they may apply as a demonstration of theoretical validation. This thesis is not about validation but about generation. Woods (1979:271) considers a final stage necessary to his own analysis. This, he writes, is

a consideration of the relationship of this model and its component parts to external forms and structures. Of course, one does not "prove" the connection with any grand theory...Clearly the link with "grand theory" is impossible to "ground" in the same sense. One tends to merely add to or subtract from its plausibility. This is not surprising since much grand theory is incapable of verification in the same way.

Sometimes the clues which point out a certain theoretical direction lead the researcher into places that are totally unexpected at the outset. This is not surprising since perhaps the strongest advantage of grounded theory generation specifically takes as its starting place the absence of pre-established theory and presumed meanings. Therefore when the researcher's attention is diverted by overwhelming evidence that suggests a new perspective, then the analysis is committed<sup>4</sup> to take account of the data in a generative way. In the world of music as well, perspectives are often changed to relocate the audiences attention. One not so common but nevertheless adequate example is found in the operatic setting of "La Boheme". Most people with a passing acquaintance with opera will recognize the story of Rudolfo and Mimi falling in love and their ultimate separation and her untimely death. This is Puccini's perspective. In the background, the story of Marcello and Musette continues as fill for the main action presented down stage. But for Leoncavallo, who also set an almost totally unknown "La Boheme", the real action was in the story of Marcello and Musette while the Mimi and Rudolfo action is set in the background. It is as if one were viewing the same opera but watching from different sides of the stage.

While this detour into opera may appear somewhat removed from the present issue, it is precisely this radical change in perspective that gave rise to clues as to a workable starting place for the unpacking of the "how" in the generation of this theoretical position<sup>5</sup>. The "labelling perspective" in sociology is well known in the area of deviance. It is argued however, that deviance is a relative thing<sup>6</sup> and as Furlong (1985:126) writes,

Labelling theorists argue that people break the rules of society in minor ways all of the time.

This is to account for the relative stance that the social acts themselves cannot be held accountable for the identification of a "deviant" because many people who "break the rules" of society simply never become known as "deviants". In fact, the labelling perspective seems more about the Actor than the Act. While Gibbs (1966) suggests that it must logically follow that a "deviant act" must have taken place by definition when someone is "erroneously thought to have engaged in a certain type of behaviour and is reacted to harshly" (Gibbs, 1966 quoted in Schur, 1971:13). But labelling theorists have typically focused their attention on the Actor and the process of labelling and the consequences. Kai Erikson writes (1962:308) that "deviance is not a property inherent in certain forms of behaviour; it is a property conferred upon these forms by the audiences..." It seems a moot point to argue that an Act is or is not "deviant" when the focus of the labelling perspective is directed toward other things. Therefore if the processes of labelling are to withstand a test, the issue of the "deviant act" is redundant. In its purest sense, the labelling perspective provides a way of explicating forms of social action. In fact, Plummer (1979:108) writes that,



Labelling theory is, in principle, applicable to any area of social life, deviant or non-deviant.

It is to his perspective that this analysis turns. Plummer (1979:86) argues that the labelling perspective is one "whose core problems are the nature, emergence, application and consequences of labels". At this level of abstraction, there is no mention of "deviance".

By way of an introduction, it may be useful to show how a deviance perspective came to be viewed as a source theory for this analysis. The labelling perspective<sup>7</sup> seems to concern itself with groups of people who are viewed in a common sense way as deviant<sup>8</sup>. This suggests Becker (1973:168) makes it difficult to study these groups because "they are regarded as outsiders by the rest of the society and because they themselves tend to regard the rest of society as outsiders". But much of what counts as deviant in a "common-sense" understanding is less than clear. While one might jump at the opportunity to claim that murder<sup>9</sup> may be taken as a pivotal case in point, we are reminded that in many cases, murder is not viewed in a way that might gain one the label of "murderer". If one's life is threatened and one reacts to defend one's own being, then society seems more willing to accept the act of murder as legitimate in the form of self-preservation. Society has developed categories to render the act of murder "safe" from labelling consequences. Therefore we read in the newspapers of such Acts as "justifiable homicide". But continuing with this metaphor, it is clear that even this latter category is not uncomplicated. If, while committing a crime, the criminal is threatened by a bystander with a gun and the criminal subsequently shoots the bystander, society is unlikely to grant the criminal immunity from prosecution as

a murderer simply because the criminal's life was threatened by the bystander, or police. Society seems prepared in practice, rather more than in theory, to assess a social act within the context of social meaning established by a society. In legal terms, pornography is often defined by "community standards". Thus it is left to a group of people who, at least symbolically (Cohen, 1985), represent the collective "meaning" for the interpretation of a social act. Cohen (1985:16) writes that,

the quintessential referent of community is that its members make, or believe they make, a similar sense of things either generally or with respect to specific and significant interests, and, further, that they think that that sense may differ from one made elsewhere.

This is how Hargreaves (1975:90) describes a groups "culture"<sup>10</sup> when he writes that,

when we consider the culture (or ideology) of a group, we are mainly concerned with the fact that groups have values, beliefs and norms. The focus is on the homogeneity of the members; we are stressing what they share in common. A group's values are the over-all guides to group behaviour, for it is the values which express what the members regard as good, ideal and desirable.

Thus it remains for a "group" or Cohen's "symbolic community" to express its cultural values, beliefs and norms. In the case of the legal interpretation of pornography, communities have taken the position that they do have this right and it is not uncommon to hear of cases in the courts. Therefore deviance, or for that matter varieties of conformity, can easily be shown to be at least partially

definitionally dependant upon a community position. We are reminded of Erikson's (1966) interpretation of the Puritans as a rather powerful example of this community definitional action. He writes, "many sociologists employ a far simpler tactic in their approach to the problem - namely, to let each social group in question provide its own definitions of deviant behaviour. (1966:6)

One term for "deviants" that flowered in the sociological literature was "Outsiders" (Becker, 1963). Becker presented a theoretical position that claimed that society's reaction to social acts is what made them definitionally "deviant", not the act itself. Thus the "deviant" commits social acts which are seen by the community as "deviant" and that process of having the society react to the Actor's social acts as deviant, makes the Actor the "deviant" person. Thus we return to the argument made earlier that the "Act" itself loses prominence in the labelling perspective when the concern becomes the Actor. The community was then seen to act toward the deviant as if he were deviant. McCall and Simmons (1978:117) write,

We impute to the real him all those characteristics, goals, and motives that constitute our image of him, and we act toward him in terms of those imputed features.

Music education students report that they believe they are seen as "outsiders" by others and they frequently report about situations that demonstrate their own perception of themselves as "insiders"; that presumably must follow if there are others who are "outsiders". Some even reported that they viewed themselves as socially deviant, however they may develop a meaning for this construct. But there is little doubt that music students generally develop a strong sense of "symbolic community" (Cohen, 1985)<sup>11</sup>.

It might take some stretch of the imagination to move from the extremes of common-sense deviancy such as serial killers, rapists and child molesters so often the subject of sociological analysis to the notion that the social action of a university student studying to become a school teacher of music might be explained through the same perspective. But if the group of students under study here claims to see itself as "deviant" or "weird" or "different", and, as has been stated earlier as a "symbolic community", surely the researcher is committed to investigate how this perception is connected to social action in the music school.

It must be reiterated that the labelling perspective seems to offer a starting point for the explanation of the social "hows" in the music school. There is no attempt to seduce the reader into thinking that there is any moral judgement being made here about music education students. And furthermore, the explicative powers of the labelling perspective are discussed here, not as a way of making music education students seem deviant, but to explicate their social action. The point must be recalled from earlier that "labelling theory is, in principle, applicable to any area of social life, deviant or non-deviant" (Plummer, 1979:108). One must not get caught up in the trap of making associations from a more common application of the perspective.<sup>12</sup>

Within the labelling perspective, a central concept is the notion of "boundary". Erickson (1966:9) develops an analysis of the community of Puritans and part of his analysis depends substantially on the notion that communities are "boundary maintaining". In fact, he suggests (p.10) that "the only material found in a society for marking the boundaries is the behaviour of its members". What is remarkable in this account stems more from the acknowledgement that social action and not just

physical location can justify the notion of community. The use of "community" has fallen from use in sociological writing because its construct has become so diffuse as to render it effectively meaningless<sup>13</sup>. "Boundaries" became viewed as physical and "real" like the streets that surrounded the place where Whyte (1955) located his study. It grew, among many other constructs, to be understood as the geographical delimiter of social action. While "community" studies abound, the sense of community as a meaningful construct lost potency in a sea of confusion and contradictions. Cohen (1985) has re-energized the construct of community by insisting that the community boundaries are "symbolic". They are often national, administrative, linguistic, racial or religious but they are also symbolic. They are "what the boundary means to people" (p.12). Cohen writes that, "at this level, community is more than oratorical abstraction: it hinges crucially on consciousness" (p.13). In fact, Cohen adds, "as one goes down the scale so the 'objective' referents of the boundary become less and less clear, until they may be quite invisible to those outside" (p.13). Thus it may explain clearly why it is often suggested in Canada, that to find a true Scotsman, one must travel to Nova Scotia for the Scottish blood is thicker there than on any of the highlands north of the English border. So much so it might be suggested, that the Scottish community in Ontario with their highland games at Fergus and Glencoe are symbolically as Scottish and as strong a Scottish community as will be found in any of the suburbs of Glasgow or Edinburgh. This shows how clearly the phenomenological community can constitute itself although lacking any sensible or otherwise logical geographic boundary.

Music education students appear very attuned to their social boundaries, both as members of the music school at large as well as a member of the more particular group of music education students. They belong to a self-designated "insider"

community composed of "musicians" which Becker (1963:86) refers to as special people, better than others and ideally not subjected to control by others. It might be reasonable to take seriously the self-acknowledged perception of music students as a strong boundary maintaining community and a community or group culture that is seen to have shared values and meanings.

The labelling perspective has often been criticised because it seems unable to explain primary deviance. That is to say that this theoretical perspective seems unable to find the source code in social action to account for the first instance when things appeared to have gone wrong. This study cannot, nor does it attempt to, discover why music education students seek to construct an identity as a "musician" in the first place. Having once applied and having been admitted to an institution of higher learning in a programme of musical studies seems evidence enough that they have some engagement in the pursuit of music. Whether that overstates the obvious is unclear. But it is evident that these students make some sort of social contract to engage themselves with music and perhaps more particularly in "musicking"<sup>14</sup>. They wish to be a "musician".

This leads directly to another important aspect of the labelling perspective, that being "rules"<sup>15</sup>. Critical to this discussion is the notion that social rules are used to establish the boundaries on social categories. Ideally people shape "values into specific rules in problematic situations" (Becker, 1963:131). The rule, writes Becker,

framed to be consistent with the value, states with relative precision which actions are approved and which forbidden, the situations to which the rule is applicable, and the sanctions attached to breaking it. (1963:131)

The values of the music school are converted into specific strategies which seem to be approved of or rejected by Others in the community. Simple examples such as the proper music to carry or what is an appropriate position to take when discussing a certain musical topic constitute "rules" which are socially defined and constructed by the members. But these "rules" are far from ideal. They are not cast in stone and as Zimmerman (1971:223) writes,

For the investigator to make decisions about rules without clarifying the basis of such decisions - particularly without reference to how personnel make such decisions - invites the treatment of rules as idealizations, possessing stable operational meanings invariant to the exigencies of actual situations of use, and distinct from the practical interests, perspective and interpretive practices of the rule user.

Thus it is that we can argue that the construction of a musician identity depends upon the consideration of appropriate social rules that give clues as to the group's values and norms with respect to what counts as a "musician". We generally consider that we know what counts as a murderer, rapists, or student by looking at the social rules that define these social categories. In the labelling perspective, rules have become a central focus, often as a simplistic version to explain that rule-breakers get caught and are therefore labelled. Little consideration has been given to the extent to which these rules are social constructs themselves and thus to the examination of social strategies that might try to construct an identity with the perceptual boundaries of these social rules by the actor, our music education student.

First, however, it is to the nature of the social category "musician" that we turn. Common-sense would have us believe that such a thing a "musician" might be easily understood. But as Cohen (1985:15) points out,

Not all social categories are so variable in meaning. But those whose meanings are the most elusive, the hardest to pin down, tend to be those also hedged around by the most ambiguous symbolism. In these cases the content of the categories is so unclear that they exist largely or only in terms of their symbolic boundaries. Such categories as justice, goodness, patriotism, duty, love, peace, are almost impossible to spell out with precision. The attempt to do so invariably generates argument, sometimes worse. But their range of meanings can be glossed over in a commonly accepted symbol - precisely because it allows adherents to attach their own meanings to it. They share the symbol but do not necessarily share its meanings.

"Musician" is such a category. While music education students seek to construct an identity as a "musician", how this social category is defined within the community stems from the production of certain social rules about the nature of the category. Thus it is that music education students seek validations, that is, seek to be labelled<sup>6</sup> as the sort of musician that the community deems to be acceptable. This places the student often in a position where his own definition or meaning of "musician" comes in conflict with the community standard. His "musician" can be judged the same way "pornographic" is often judged, that is by community standards. Not all worldly forms of "musician" are acknowledged as we have seen. Music education students, as has been shown, often seem not to fully embrace the apparent community standard in private and at the same time appear to have need to validate themselves within the rules of the community standard "musician". Thus the focus of our attention must drift away from the definitional rules toward the process of validation. Hargreaves et al. (1975) base the identification of school children's deviance on a "act" basis where



the teacher places a child's "type" on hold pending further "acts" of deviance to push the child into the deviant category. But clearly in this instance, the "act" of musicking (Small, 1987) does not in itself constitute justification for claiming a "musician" identity. In fact, so much musicking goes on in the music school, that aside from more noteworthy events, music students seem only to risk their tentative claim on the musician identity by playing unmusically<sup>17</sup> or playing wrong notes (loudly). One does not simply break "rules" or conform to "rules" in order to claim or validate a musician identity. In fact, there has been too much emphasis on rules in the labelling perspective and the original offender may be Becker (1973:1) himself. He writes, "that when a rule is enforced, the person who is supposed to have broken it may be seen as a special kind of person". It is important to explore the concept of rule as it applies to music education students construction of a musician identity.

Schur (1971:24) writes, "it is questionable that the notion of rules itself is broad enough to describe deviation...reference to departures from expectations may be more useful than is reference to violations of rules". The notion of expectations (Brittan (1973) comes closer to the core perception. Perhaps because so very much musicking takes place in the music school, students must resort to more overt acts to substantiate their claim on an identity as a musician. How does one demonstrate to others that one is as wet or more wet than others when everyone is in the pool? If music education students are expected to constantly make music, i.e. perform, then they must come, and do appear to come to a base line expectation of what they are as musicians over time. "Rules" define specific acts or episodes but they do not account for the on-going career validations sought by music students. The development of an identity as a musician is process, not single acts of rule conformity. As stated before, the labelling perspective seems ultimately better focused

on the Actor rather than the Act. Therefore concentration on "rules" which define specific Acts seems again misdirected. It seems important to redirect the labelling perspective back to identity (Lofland, 1969, McCall & Simmons, 1978) and away from an apparent central concern for rules. The social construction of reality as a musician hinges on the enduring qualities (reputation) which are not easily explained by rules. Identity was an original strand in the labelling perspective which seems to have been lost to those focusing on rules and rule-breakers. It is more important that the individual constructs his identity as a "deviant", "musician" or "father" rather than simply acknowledging that certain "social acts" place him in these categories such as a "single sexually deviant act", "singing a song in the shower" or "the biological fathering a child". One's identity as a "sexual deviant", a "musician" or a "father" depends substantially more on a career, a sustaining engagement which is acknowledged by Other rather than by the simple recognition of any of these static acts which might very well fall within the definition of the identity construct that Person may adopt. Music education students see themselves viewed by some others as departing from expectations, usually regarding the apparent lack of scholarship since so much of their "work" is centred on "performance". As an insider, however, they see themselves as meeting their "expectations" that will grant the social authority to claim the identity as a musician. They build an interactional network of significant Others and Reference groups (Kelley, 1952) to validate their claim, not just for the moment or the act, but also deliberately taking into account the "who". This analysis brings labelling back to its roots as transactional. People negotiate and Others must make decisions whether to react and also how to react. We are reminded of Brittan's (1973:121) observation when he writes,

What men offer before audiences is what they believe audiences expect. They try to maximize the efficacy and power of their

performance so as to ensure the maximum degree of social cohesion.

Thus the focus seems logically tied to "expectations" and "process". "Identity" write Berger and Luckmann (1967:194) "is formed by social processes".

Of central concern seems to be the continuing assessment by music education students to the reactions of Others to their social performances. The labelling perspective is so attuned to "societal reaction" that these two terms are often considered synonyms. As a sociological construct however, significant explanation of the particulars of the construct are scant in the literature. There may be explanations for this apparent paucity. Gibbs (1981:499) reports,

Consider Gove's comment (1975:3) "In 1938, Tannenbaum published a statement that was to become a landmark of what is now known as either the societal reaction or the labelling perspective." The comment is entirely consistent with conventional terminology.

Gibbs (1981:500) suggests that the confusion in critiques of both the societal reaction theory (Gove, 1975) and the staunch supporters of the labelling perspective (Kitsuse, 1975) have talked "past one another" because "they interpret the perspective in quite different ways". Societal reaction theory often focuses on the character of the "reaction" and this reaction is "contingent upon (1) the social identity of the individual (2) the social identity of the reactors (3) the operating rules of the reactor's organization and/or (4) the circumstances before, during and after the act." (Gibbs, 1981:499). Again, however, the focus is redirected away from the Actor, this time towards the "reaction". Perhaps one is able to re-organize these criteria in a way that

accounts for the process of constructing a "social identity" given as (1) above by suggesting that the construction of this social identity is contingent upon the Actor taking account of the "reactions" of (2) (3) and (4) above. The "reaction" itself does not appear to be the significant component in the identity construction equation but more the way in which the Actor takes account of the reaction. The extent to which the more "structural" or "organizational" rules apply is challenged except to say that the music education students seem to have "Others" whose reactions are taken into account and those for whom little taking into account occurs. Thus the Organization to which Gibbs make reference must be considered to be the socially constructed "symbolic community" (Cohen, 1985) or that of the "group" (Hargreaves, 1975).

Kitsuse (1962:22) writes, "it is the responses of the conventional and conforming members of the society who identify and interpret behaviour as deviant which sociologically transforms persons into deviants". Music education students come to know who they are by how they are received socially in the music school. They are conferred with their status by the reactions of others, particularly as it relates to their status as a "performer". Who are these "conventional and conforming members" to whom Kitsuse makes reference? The labelling literature makes frequent reference to the reactions by others but seldom addresses who these others must be. While music students are apparently aware that they are viewed as weird, odd or strange by others outsiders, and they seem equally aware that their academic programme is misunderstood by outsiders. Kitsuse rightly focuses our attention on criteria used to elect Others whose reactions count. Music students take account of each other and of course members of faculty. While they seem concerned about the grading process and its impact on their ability to continue in the programme, particularly at UWO where a three year non-honours stream provides a dumping ground for the academically

weak<sup>18</sup>, it is mostly to their peer insiders that they take account of. In fact, many of their social strategies are designed specifically to ensure some sort of positive "societal reaction" to them as a "musician". Thus positive outsiders reactions are transmitted to insiders as a technique or strategy to heighten others' awareness of their claim on a musician identity<sup>19</sup>. Therefore a concert performance exterior to the university would seldom go unannounced to peers who might be expected to take account of the event and react in a positive way. Most important in all of this is the continuing nature of the negotiation. No one single act as a musician seems to validate the claim for long (Schur, 1971:8). The claim on a musician identity is an on-going process. It is a complex and enduring negotiation for which little in the area of rules or reaction to single acts seems able to justify a "final" or "enduring" claim. Furthermore, even the instance of reaction which might be considered as acceptance into the university programme seems incapable of providing any "enduring" legitimation on the musician claim. In fact, it might be argued that this particular "status passage" (Glaser & Strauss, 1971) might better be seen as a pivotal reaction in providing an indication that the musician identity is a "career negotiation" since common-sense might dictate that acceptance into the music school would confer the right to claim the musician label as a once-and-for-all category. Because all acts of musicking (Small, 1987) are within the bounds of expectations, students base their claim to a musician identity on a more socially constructed normative model. Thus there are "good, better and best" musicians. Negotiations are for implied normative points toward a better class of musician, a higher rating perceived and validated by the reactions of others to one's claim. Music education students are given a sort of "token identity" or "expectation" or acceptance as a musician when they are accepted by the music school and they are left to construct their own concept of performer or musician by on-going negotiation with and among peers and others in the music

school. Thus the strategy appears to become not to be just a trumpet player but the "best" trumpet player<sup>20</sup>. Whatever identity conferring strategies one can use to ensure that others accept this announcement (Stone, 1970) of identity are brought to bear upon others for reaction. As well as the many honest strategies that students use, many seem to resort to forms of deceit. A few examples again may suffice to remind the reader of some of these strategies. They carry around music they cannot play. They announce concerts exterior to the university that they do not play. They use before class opportunities to "show off" new sections of technically difficult material they may not actually be studying. They brag, they lie and they make obvious even the smallest thing that might make them noticeable as a better or best musician. And all of this in the hope that they will not be exposed as less than they make as their claim, that is their "announcement" (Stone, 1970). Just simple acts of musicking do not in any way suffice. Everywhere there is extreme. There are the "practice-bunnies" at UWO who live in the little rooms. Students who believe themselves unable to compete directly report that they only practice at home, thus not allowing insiders to establish their real level of performance. These students apparently allow themselves a claim based on the common-sense adage that in the absence of contrary evidence, this may be taken as so.

But there seem to be barriers to the claim as the "best" musicians. The music education students often see a claim made by some students as a definitionally superior class of students, the performance majors. Music education students often view themselves as subjected to a societal reaction that places them normatively below the performance majors. Thus music education students often come to see themselves as a stigmatised group. We are reminded that even "everyday language also reveals the low esteem in which some people are held" (Pfuhl, 1980:221) and how students

auditioning for the music school reported indicators of the low esteem that music education appeared to hold in the music school. Berger (1963:98) writes that "identity is socially bestowed, socially sustained and socially transformed". If music education majors see themselves as unable to effectively claim their construct of the most desirable kind of musician identity because of some perception of a "structural" obstacle, the academic major in the music school, then they appear justified in claiming that they are a stigmatized group. They become "discredited" (Goffman, 1963:41) individuals.

From Goffman (1963:3) we see that the concept of stigma can focus on categories of people who are "discounted". Music education students report many instances where they are charged with being unserious. They see themselves as "discounted" with respect to the very claim that they wish to make as a musician. This writes Goffman (1963:3) constitutes "a special discrepancy between virtual and actual social identity" and that "the term stigma, then, will be used to refer to an attribute that is deeply discrediting, but it should be seen that a language of relationships, not attributes is really needed". If one concludes that the "relationship" between the perceived "better" performance major and the hopeful claimant "music education major is such that the latter becomes "discredited" then it is an easy step to project the notion that music education students appear to see themselves as stigmatised and that being a music education major comes to be seen as "deeply discrediting". It is as if the deviant corridor described by Rubington and Weinberg (1973:228) is converted into the corridor toward the ultimate "musician" but the music education students are obliged to exit early. Music education students reject a definition of themselves as having a differential in talent, that is, a perception of musicking (Small, 1987) potential. Many report other interests or academic responsibilities that hinder their

access to an equivalent amount of practice time and hence their performing skills are understandably diminished, not because they lack potential (talent) but because they do not have the opportunity, or desire in many cases, to put the time on the task of performing. Thus they reject the notion that they are not serious musicians or are not worthy to consider themselves as performing equals. This results in two basic strategies with respect to seeking societal reaction. The first is the group which builds an identity as a "not bad for a music education student" and the other type which strive to dispute the claim. They often appear to actually perform better than many of the performance majors and when that can be substantiated in any instance, the claim is made loudly and with considerable pride. Thus when the music education major at UWO's Faculty of Education reports that he played in the orchestra in a year when all the principal chairs were held by music education students, he is clearly indicating his rejection of the definitionally superior claim that performing majors have and is engaging at the very time of the interview in the process of "announcing" (Stone, 1970) his claim on the superior musician identity. Thus it is that the process of this investigation is seen as part of a symbolic interaction. The stigma attached to being a music education student may be viewed by an disinterested observer as simply a successful social strategy of the performance major to ensure their own claim on the musician identity. But on the whole, the music education students see themselves as devalued musicians, not definitionally capable of claiming a "superior" musician identity. Therefore it was not uncommon to hear comments such as "I felt inadequate as a musician"(P9:13/4) arise in the course of the interviews. The most critical meaning however attached to this is that music education students believe that others view their worth as a musician with [moral] worth as a person. Therefore to garner societal reaction to support an identity as a fine musician seems to equate in meaning to gaining an acceptance as a fine person. Unfortunately for students who cannot or



choose not to gather such positive societal reaction, their level of self-worth diminishes and many of these otherwise adequate musicians leave the music school altogether.

The labelling perspective has given some prominence to the notion of "identity". Hargreaves (1976:201) discusses the four factors he considers important for a pupil in the acceptance of a label "as part of his identity". It is later in this paper that Hargreaves focuses on the more central issue for music education students when he writes that "instead of the act being just part of the person, the deviant act comes to engulf the person (p.204). This construct of engulfment or from Hughes (1945), "Master status", appears to best describe the pivotal importance that music education students place on the "performer" label as their "identity" in the music school. So important are these four factors that a brief review is warranted as they apply to this analysis. The first factor concerns the "frequency of labelling". Music education students engage in many social activities which provide opportunities for labelling by others. In fact, they go out of their way to create opportunities to get labelled as a "musician". The more frequently they can achieved this recognition by others, the more secure their claim on a "musician identity" seems to be. It cannot be stressed enough that the process of being labelled, that is being acknowledged as a musician is an on-going social action. No single act of musicking or few acts of musicking can establish a claim on this identity. The second factor Hargreaves identifies is the "extent to which the pupil sees the teacher as a 'significant other' whose opinion counts". The view music education students seem to hold with respect to "significant others" is well developed in this analysis and can easily be seen to uphold Hargreaves' second factor. The next factor is the "extent to which others support the label". The development of a "musician" identity by a music education student seems

to depend heavily on the imputation generally by others around him. The last factor considers the "public nature of the labelling"<sup>21</sup>. Music education students are involved, as a "musician", in social action which is very public. "Musicians" are constantly displaying their claim on their identity with performances, both musical and social. More importantly however is the apparent necessity to make the labelling as public as possible. This is perhaps required because of the immense amount of general musicking that takes place in the music school. Thus public exposure of a successful labelling becomes even more important where the validating "act" is so commonplace.

The most significant departure in the application of the labelling perspective to explicate the social action of music education student rests with the reversal of the typical attitude of the recipient of the labelling. The labelling perspective has been criticised because it is seen as directing its efforts towards fields which are "in fact commonly recognized as deviant" (Plummer, 1979:97)<sup>22</sup> and it is also seen as studying the helpless or powerless, the "underdog" (see Gouldner, 1968). We are reminded of this most crudely when Plummer (1979:89) reports,

"People go about minding their own business, and then 'wham', bad society comes along and slaps them with a stigmatising label. Forced into the role of deviant, the individual has little choice but to be deviant (Akers, 1973:24).

Music education students could never wish for a more perfect world than one where bad society could just come along out of the blue and slap them with a musician label that would stick. They engage in interactional strategies specifically designed to bring about this labelling. The question in this analysis can be formulated from the reverse

perspective. What happens if a person seeks to be labelled as a particular type, that is, seeks overtly to develop an identity as a "musician" based in large measure upon the societal reaction by Others.

Music education students appear to want to be labelled a "musician". The labelling perspective has been criticised strongly because it is seen to ignore the sources of deviancy. It appears not to concern itself with the original motivation for the first deviant act (Gibbs, 1966; Bordua, 1967; Mankoff, 1971; Taylor, Walton & Young, 1973; Davis, 1972)<sup>23</sup>. But much of this concern centres on the social problems of deviancy rather than the sociological problems. It is perhaps of some importance to the social problem to determine the motivation for the original act of murder because we find murder socially offensive. But hardly anyone could be expected to find social offense in wishing to become a school music teacher. Why students wish to do this is not sought nor answered in this thesis. To expect this of this analysis would as Plummer (1979:103) writes be seen as "unfair in so far as they [the criticisms] attack the perspective for not doing what it manifestly does not set out to do".

In fact, it is not the first act as a "musician" that holds much interest at all. It is as the "secondary-deviant" (Lemert, 1951, 1967; Hargreaves et al. 1975:5), that is, with the continuing search for affirmation as a "musician" that this study concerns itself. Of course, musicians have been studied as a deviant group before. Becker (1963) in his essay on the "Culture of a Deviant Group" uses dance musicians in Chicago as a case study.

Thus it is to the criticism that the labelling perspective is a vacuous tautology when it suggests that things are as they are simply because they are defined so by others. Saragin (1967:9) notes that,

Becker's statement is not a definition and should not be confused with one. It merely delineates the self-process by which the placing of a person, or a group of persons, in the category of deviant is made, but fails to note the characteristics that deviants have in common, and those which are utilized by oneself and others to give persons that label.

Therefore, as Plummer (1979:95) writes, "it is possible to say the same things Becker about almost any other form of behaviour: conformity is behaviour that people so label". But without trying to remove any validity in this criticism that may be legitimate, it is possible that when the very essence of the labelling perspective as a form of identity construction is taken, it might very well be reasonable to assign criteria to labels thus making it possible to use this perspective to explain the identity construction with any form of master status. In fact, Schervish (1973:51) reports that Friedson (1965:98) suggests that sociologists might profit from paying more attention to the aggressive aspects of the labelee's role in the process of label designation". As it is Schervish (1973:51) that notes,

the general tendency of labelling studies to concentrate on the passive rather than the aggressive aspects of the labelee, on the 'coerced imputation' of a label rather than the 'chosen internalization' of a label.

This notion that an individual can seek to be labelled as a particular type of person<sup>24</sup> such as the music education student seeking to be labelled a "musician" appears to be not so fundamentally incongruent with the labelling perspective. Jackson (1968:338) writes that "a person can 'engineer' a change in the role expectations held in his behalf rather than passively waiting for others to 'allocate' or 'assign' roles to him". Thus it might be expected that music education students would undertake a theatre to seek labelling from others to validate their claim on a "musician" identity". Klapp (1972:3) also concerns himself with the dynamics of self-typing when he writes that "everyone in modern society is vitally interested in creating a type for himself, the deviant no less than the Philistine".

While the concept of typing is important, it is to the notion that Hargreaves (1976:204) develops when he writes of the engulfment of the person by the deviant that we turn. The identity, or master status (Hughes, 1945), seems most appropriately borrowed from the deviant literature. We need only remind ourselves of the insistence by the questioned music education students that they wished to be seen as good "musicians" over all else, in order to focus the attention on this "pivotal identity" component. While Hargreaves et al. (1975:144) write that the labelling perspective considers the process of naming or typing other in a particular way, they continue by noting,

It asserts that the naming of certain kinds of persons - "deviants" - and the treatment that often accompanies such naming, can have particular consequences...and paradoxically, these consequences can reinforce, strengthen or increase the deviant conduct which labelling is perhaps intended to punish, diminish or remove.

But if the labellee, the music education student, is out in his social world looking for someone to label him, there is every reasonable expectation that such labelling would in fact increase, strengthen or reinforce his perception of himself, his identity as a "musician". Hargreaves, Hester & Mellor (1975:145) suggest that pupils are typed by teachers in three stages. The third and final stage is "stabilization" which the authors describe as the point "at which the teacher has a relatively clear and stable conception of the identity of the pupils". For the music education student the process of developing a truly stabilized identity appears almost doomed from the start. If, as we have seen, the music education student searches for an identity as a "musician" which they seem to define as a "performer" and elect to proceed in the music education stream, thereby not electing the "performance stream", they defeat the most obvious clue as to their "idealized" identity. They cannot simply assert their identity because they perceive that they have "structurally" denied it. Thus to preserve and capture labelling opportunities in order to sustain such an identity as a "musician", they see the need to seek to be labelled and to find ways to disassociate themselves from the music education stigma.

Hargreaves, Hester & Mellor (1975:204) write that

it is through the stigmatization that the labeller's conceptualization of the pupil as a deviant person comes to make its impact on the pupil's identity.

It has been shown clearly earlier in this thesis that the music education stream in the music school is viewed by students and some faculty as a stigmatised group. Music education students seek what Goffman (1963:43) refers to as "prestige

symbols" rather than the "stigma symbols" as a strategy to develop "disidentifiers". That is, not seeing in the music school any positive identity constructs for the music educator, they seek to be seen as a "performer" and thus disidentify themselves with the music education world in favour of the more prestigious "performer" identity.

Thus it is that the tradition within social science originating in the labelling perspective which provides a source position to elucidate the social actions of the music education student wishing to construct an identity as a musician for himself. For the identity of this student rests on his ability to see himself and be seen by others as the "musician" that he wishes himself to be and that he sees the music school appearing to foster. His wish to become a music teacher is at best a neutral identity component when the student is successful enough in disidentifying from that stigmatised group and in many cases perhaps even a strongly negative identity component for those who appear less able to engulf themselves in the "musician" identity.

## Notes for Chapter Twelve

1. see Schutz, A. (1964) "The Stranger"

2. Although the labelling outcome is expected to be substantially different, the process in this "singing-in" is not at all unlike the process described by Garfinkel, Harold (1956) "Conditions of Successful Degradation Ceremonies" American Journal of Sociology, 61/March, pps. 420-424 where he suggests the potent effects of "public labelling" in fostering the development of "deviant identity" particularly through "status degradation ceremonies". In our example, the fostering of a musician identity through public labelling opportunities such as the frosh singing-in or musical performances must be seen as having potent effects on the claim to the musician identity.

3. Schur (1971:15) writes, "it seems most acceptable to insist that there is no single point at which an individual becomes deviant for once and for all".

4. This analytical "commitment" seems equally bound by Becker's (1960) "side-bets" in the same way as other social actions. Since this research acknowledges that the research process itself is a form of symbolic interaction, it is not surprising that these "side-bets" constrain the research perspective in a similar way to the way they influence other social action.

5. Accounts of analytical surprises are not reported too often in the literature. Perhaps because the researcher wishes to present the impression that the original "false" start did not happen or because the final result is considered to be all that is important. One very good exception is, however, Becker's recounting of his research with the career patterns of the Chicago public school teacher. He writes (1970:43), "I knew, before I started to interview teachers...My advisor, Everett Hughes had a theory about it...I firmly believed Professor Hughes' theory to be correct; even if I had not, the wily wisdom of graduate students dictated that I pretend to believe it and make every effort to prove it. When I interviewed teachers, however, they refused to support my expectation".

6. In fact it is often argued that the labelling perspective fails to distinguish adequately between deviance and non-deviance (Schur, 1971:13). See also Gibbs, Jack (1966) "Conceptions of Deviant Behaviour: The Old and the New" Pacific Sociological Review. 9/Spring, pp.9-14.

7. The labelling perspective is from Plummer (1979). While it has variously been called a theory and proposition, Plummer prefers to view it as a "perspective" because of the confusions of labelling proponents themselves and the narrow orientation of their critics (p.88)



8. Liazos, A. (1972) has demonstrated this position most graphically in his paper "The Poverty of the Sociology of Deviance: Nuts, Sluts, and Perverts" Social Problems 20/Summer. "Liazos maintains that the use of the term deviant itself constitutes a case of pejorative labelling and is a reflection of popular prejudices on the part of the sociologist" (Gibbons, Don & Joseph Jones (1975:170) The Study of Deviance : Perspectives and Problems. Prentice-Hall.

9. One difficulty in using such a social category for comparison is that "murder" as well as many of the other common-sense categories of deviance such as "rape" are not seen as processes but are the result of "single" once-and-for-all labels. This analysis stresses the process model. But for the obvious use of showing that these social categories are not as simple as the actual label may imply, the present use of murderer may suffice.

10. see also Becker, H.S. and Blanche Geer (1960) "Latent Culture: A Note on the Theory of Latent Social Roles" Administrative Science Quarterly. 5/September.

11. or sub-group in Hargreaves (1975) version

12. This would make the reader guilty of "mis-labelling" but might strengthen the case for the obvious power of the perspective to influence perception would be shown to be correct.

13. Peter Hamilton writes in the forward to Cohen (1985:7) that "even as early as the mid-1950's an enterprising American sociologist had uncovered more than 90 discrete definitions of the term [community] in use within the social sciences.

14. from Small (1987)

15. Becker (1963:147-163) discusses the notion of the "moral entrepreneur". In this case study we see "signs" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967:50) that suggest that many students and also faculty operating in the music school as moral entrepreneurs or as Becker writes, "the crusader is fervent and righteous, often self-righteous". This is worked upon others in the form of the "only right kinds of music" for example and also about the "only kind of musician". Where the power differential is large as in the case of the moral entrepreneur professor and the student, the student easily falls victim to the values of the more powerful.

16. There may be a good comparison to be made for the masochist who also seeks to be labelled as a deviant. No such attempt is offered here and any ideas are left to the imagination of the reader.

17. see Kingsbury (1984) where he claims that to play "musically" is the most important thing altogether in the music school.

18. Students must achieve certain grades to remain in the "honours" programme and

those who do not are placed in the three-year non-honours stream. Very few students seem to elect the three-year programme although that is a possibility.

19. This has been discussed as "talk" and "knowledge" in the sense of social strategy.

20. It is important to remember that the normative standard is somewhat confusing and simplistic. It is not sufficient to say that the student wants to become the "best" without trying to indicate that it appears to be crucial to try to understand what the student means by "best". Of course, it is almost impossible to gain this assessment of "meaning" since the symbolic boundaries (Cohen, 1985) are quite invisible at times. It is very difficult to say just what exactly the "best" is "best" at. There are, of course, some clues but it may suffice to say that that it is not nearly as simplistic as a "good, better, best" paradigm might suggest.

21. see Garfinkel, H. (1956) "Conditions of Successful Degradation Ceremonies" American Journal of Sociology. 61/March

22. see also Liazios (1972)

23. see Hargreaves, Hester & Mellor (1975) note 4 on page 265-6 for a more complete review of this criticism.

24. For a particularly good theory of typing see Hargreaves, Hester & Mellor, (1975), Chapter 6.

## **Section C**

### **Appraisal and Review**

# Appraisal and Review

## Appraisal

The focus of this research has been to examine how music education students in Canadian Universities try to make sense of their social world. At the outset, there are two obvious choices to make with respect to how a researcher might attack such a vast area of concern, define the terms of investigative focus and subsequently to carry out the research according to the plan chosen. These two systems of investigation are well known as qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Each makes certain assumptions about the world and how it might best be attacked, in a clinical sense.

In order to try to determine more specific research questions about the world of music education and how the "what is at issue" (Kingsbury, 1984:30) might best be attacked, the qualitative methodology was chosen in the tradition of sociology because it appeared at the outset to be that the construction of an identity as a musician and a construction of an identity as an educator were somehow at war with each other. Sociology, as a discipline, appeared to offer the best tools to unravel the student's world. The predisposition to examine the perceived problem from the perception and social construction vantage of the students involved was from the belief of this

researcher that the success of officially mandated solutions to some apparent problems in the satisfactory preparation of a school music teacher depended in large measure to the way the students themselves came to understand a sense of who they were. Research into curriculum areas in music education (Schmidt, 1986, 1989) gave little satisfactory evidence that by changing the arrangement of apparently fairly universal content somewhat, that any real change in the students would result.

Several pressing problems in music education were emerging in the literature that dealt with the validity of school knowledge in school music (Vulliamy, 1978; Small, 1987; Elliott, 1989; Roberts, 1989) and in the way that suggested that in a very general sense that much of the justification for school music had been built on a straw house and was at best flawed or perhaps even fundamentally in error (Elliott, 1989b; Roberts, 1989; Zimmerschied, 1989).

Thus the apparent heart of the issue was viewed by this researcher not as an issue of what students knew, that resulting from some tinkering with the distribution of what appear to be commonly accepted curriculum areas (Schmidt, 1986, 1989) but much more an issue of who these people were. This led to the discipline of sociology to investigate an apparent need in music education.

Sociology is well equipped for this task and provided a vast literature about the nature of who people are. How students made sense of their social world and constructed meanings were considered key considerations. There were only two basic originating questions and those were whether to make certain assumptions about the social world of students, generate postulates about this social world from the perspective of an interested "insider" and test them in perhaps a quantitative way, or

to try to reject one's predispositions to "insider" knowledge and let the issues evolve in a style of investigation that placed the interested researcher in a position where the discovery of the issues was viewed as more central and more important. Both would be potentially useful but the first runs the very real risk that the postulates placed before the members of the social world under investigation would simply prove false<sup>1</sup> and thereby nothing of truth would be uncovered. The second method runs the extreme risk that the researcher misinterprets social signals by assuming shared meanings that may not be shared at all.

As is now patently obvious, this researcher chose the second method of investigation. Two pivotal studies in the music education literature provided the main argument for the choice. The first by Kadushin (1969) showed that the quantitative method had failed to provide much information of substance concerning the nature of the music student except for the single clue that Kadushin suggested that the single most important thing about being a musician was one's own "self-concept"<sup>2</sup> as a musician. The second study was one by L'Roy who claimed to investigate the world of music education students from a symbolic interactionist's perspective and from a qualitative perspective yet systematically built her conclusions on the pencil and paper test she devised apparently from the limited interviewing of music education students which she conducted. Both studies seemed to set out to search for a better understanding of what music students are. Neither seemed to get it right. Both made advances but both seemed to trap themselves with pre-established categories with meanings that were unclear or certainly without obvious shared constructs.

There are many well respected studies in the sociological literature that pointed to a better method. The first one considered was Becker et al. (1961) Boys in White.

Here the researchers set out to determine the nature of medical education and they took the perspective that whatever might be going on is a product of daily interaction of the students who shared day-to-day problems with each other. It is from the perspective of the students themselves, as if their social action might be accountable to their own assigned meanings to social events and symbols. They did not concentrate on everybody's perspective in the medical school but made the student the central concern. This study came to examine only the group of students who were music education students, not music students generally.

The basic methodological direction can be attributed to Glaser and Strauss (1967) who exposed a system of enquiry that had as its central tenet the develop of grounded theory concerning the social action of groups of people. Following that model, this research takes as its basic assumption that the meaning of "musician" is a social construction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and that music students interact on the basis of the meanings that they come to associate with their own social construction of a musician identity (McCall & Simmons, 1978).

The methodology was conceived to expose, that is discover social facts that could lead to the development of a grounded theory that might help explain social action. The notion of "grounded" rests in the very heart of the data and calls for the analysis of data to take place during the formulation of ever more specific theoretical postulates and that these hypothesises are then brought back to the social world and tried out for "fit" and further refinement. These emerging theoretical propositions guide the data collection process for information about emerging categories and the process of investigation spins around in an every tightening spiral toward the centre of theoretical development. Thus verification and discovery are entwined. The danger

concerns the possibility of researcher bias in reconstructing the meanings and subsequently skewing the generation of the theory. Becker (1970:40) however, believes that there is less risk of researcher bias in studies using this style of data gathering techniques. He writes,

Field observation is less likely than more controlled methods of laboratory experiment and survey interview to allow the researcher to bias the results he gets in directions suggested by his own expectations.

There were two major data collection strategies used in this study. The first was a long series of unstructured (Borg & Gall, 1983) interviews. The interview trail began with a series of music education students at Memorial University of Newfoundland. The entire membership of the graduating class participated and these 10 students provided an initial "pilot" study into what some of the issues may be. This is the university where this researcher is a member of faculty and serves as the co-ordinator of music education. Certain critical issues were uncovered during these initial interviews concerning the skill of the interviewer (actually lack of) and in addition to honing the technique of the researcher as an interviewer, these sessions with the students pointed out some potentially major areas of investigative categories as well as raising the issue of when the most important time for the interviews might be.

The question of objectivity could easily be raised about a researcher tinkering in his own backyard with students over whom there may be some academic authority but the candour of the students who took part in these interviews was surprisingly open.



It is, however, from Schutz's (1953) member's own accounts that the data originated in this study. Thus there is not the same possibility of inference (Becker, 1958). The objectivity of the researcher in the other sites is even less of a potential problem and it was in three other Canadian universities that the bulk of this investigation took place.

The second batch of interviews took place at the University of Western Ontario at the beginning of the academic year 1987. The first 12 interviews were from the music education class at the Faculty of Education, all having graduated from the Faculty of Music at UWO previously<sup>3</sup>. The next group were representatives of all four years at the UWO Faculty of Music, 37 in all. After several months of analysis, a further 9 students were interviewed at the University of Alberta and then a repeat of the first 12 UWO Faculty of Education students who had participated in September. They had in the meanwhile completed all of their studies except the last round of student teaching. Following another few months of analysis, a further round of interviews was conducted with 14 students at the University of British Columbia. The data collection phase of this study consumed nearly 18 months in all and required more than 42,000 miles of air travel. It is a study of considerable depth and breath. This is important to state because the study is not just a single case study. A single case study, particularly at the researcher's own university might easily be challenged for objectivity despite using members' own accounts of reality. A single site study as case study could be also challenged for discovering only local "realities". This study builds its conclusions from more than 130 hours of interviews with 82 students (of which 12 were repeated) in four major Canadian Universities, the first about 7000 miles away from the last. It is here that much of the strength of the hypothesis rests.

Each of these four universities has a different political arrangement for the music teacher education program yet the core issues appear to remain the same.

The second investigative technique was "participant observation". Woods (1979:260-263) claims that he was an "involved" rather than a "participating" observer. By that he means that "he did not take on an accepted role in the institution". This researcher would make the same claim. Kingsbury (1984) of course participated as a mock student. The component part of participant observation were very clearly divided for this researcher. The role as observer was a relatively passive activity where periods of time were given over to watching and listening to the social action in the UWO lounge and in classes. Quite often, as Woods acknowledges, the researcher was called upon to offer academic help and to fix certain instruments. This may be important because it shows that the position taken was not one of a "distant camera" but by placing the researcher in the hub of social action. From this position, it would have been impossible to retreat into isolated note taking. On the other hand, the role as participant was equally defined. Although no particular mock student or mock faculty member role was assumed, the researcher (as musician) was asked to participate by singing in choirs, playing in bands or conducting these ensembles. Other participant activities included a rather casual lecture to the students at UBC on the condition of music education in Newfoundland. These research strategies, of course, were and are an on-going process at the researcher's own university. But at the other sites, particularly at UWO, the critical time for observation was determined to be the very beginning of the academic year because of the apparent "instant" acceptance into the music school community and for a period of several weeks at this critical time as well as again later in the year, a significant amount of time was spent actually interacting with the music students as a participant in their

world and as an observer to it. Observations became fuel for interviews and interviews provided clues for observation (Denzin, 1970). Each in its own way supported and engulfed the process of the other. Each observation and interview added to an understanding of a process of theoretical development that was checked, rebuilt and validated time after time. It was thus that the theoretical categories became saturated (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

McNamara (1980:115) is not as accepting of Actor's accounts nor of the interpretive work done using these accounts. He suggests that "researchers invariably have a message for us...They use their fieldwork experiences to promote their own research goals". Such a criticism is difficult to counter, particularly when it would be impractical to append some seven volumes of more than 4000 pages of interview transcripts just to let the critics such as McNamara make their own selections from the transcripts. He writes that "we know nothing of the corpus from which their evidence is chosen" (1980:123). In this thesis however, unlike Kingsbury (1984) by comparison, offers substantial contextualised accounts to enable critics such as McNamara to make sensitive judgements themselves about the predilection for researcher bias. Furthermore, it has been stated within that the very "predispositions" toward explanative theories (Becker, 1970:43) were rejected and have not become the bedrock upon which the remaining theoretical stance rests. Furthermore, in addition to substantial participant observation, indepth interviews provided opportunities to unpack questionable social action and to gather actors' accounts concerning observed social actions, albeit as reconstructions, but certainly not solely in the imagination of the researcher.

Major periods of time for preliminary analysis between the various packages of interviews was critical. After each set of interviews, each was transcribed accurately and analytical categories were culled and formulations of the theoretical perspective were developed and taken to the next set of interviews. This resulted in some seven volumes of transcripts totalling more than 4000 pages. In addition, field experiences and observations were notated and student newspapers and faculty notices were gathered to build a collection of data from which categories could be saturated and a grounded theory could emerge with confidence.

Researchers using quantitative methods have quite specific statistical tools to ensure adequacy with respect to reliability of results. They have quite specific rules to follow with respect to the statistical assumptions made with respect to the sampling of their data. Sampling in this study is a combination of "judgement" (Burgess, 1984:55), "opportunistic" (Burgess, 1984:55) and most importantly, "theoretical" sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:47). Each university was selected as a research site based upon the judgement of the researcher. Although at UWO, the Dean of the music school was asked to provide a "random" sample of students from each academic year and a very positive response was forthcoming from all those students invited to participate, other important interviews arose out of a need for "opportunistic" sampling where in the course of participation or observation, these students appeared to have something to offer the research. Of course, central to the process of developing the theoretical hypothesis presented in this thesis, "theoretical" sampling criteria prevailed which do not require the same full coverage that might be expected in more quantitative models (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:69).

The validity of the study rests largely on the fact that the reporting is largely given over to the students' accounts (Schutz, 53; Cicourel, 1964; Woods, 1979). Unlike Kingsbury (1984) who develops and reports his position in the virtual absence of Actors' accounts and who claims validity on the basis of experiential knowledge of "insider" versus "outsider" wisdom made poignantly clear to him early in his research, this research, like Whyte (1955) lets the Actors tell their own story. While it may be possible to weave a web of intrigue and fabricate a fiction around so many contextualized accounts, it would rest with the reader to demonstrate that another reality exists and that this alternative view of the situation negates what is postulated here. Of course, accounts are "cross-validated" (Woods, 1979:264) extensively so that observations were challenged in interviews and interview assertions were carefully watched for in participant observation. Assertions in one interview were also challenged and examined in subsequent interviews. This is what has been referred to as the "interview chain" in this thesis. This led to an understanding as "a phenomena of shared meaning" (Woods, 1979:265) and the reporting in contextualized format gives the reader a similar opportunity to explore the social world of these music education students and to construct their own understanding as "a phenomena of shared meaning". Glaser and Strauss (1967:67) suggest that "insiders" should take account of their own knowledge as long as it is "lived experience". They claim (p.252) that these experiences as much as any other may provide the "springboards to systematic theorizing". Miller (1952) made the researcher aware of the possible dangers of "over-rapport" and a thorough description of the researcher's entry (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973) into the social world has been given previously in this report. With the apparent need for the participant observer and interviewer to be able to understand the language of the musician as well as participate in musicking (Small,

1987) activities, the strength of the validity may rest substantially on the qualities of the researcher as much as on the quality of the data.

Of course, certain aspects of the reality may be seen to be underplayed in this analysis. A sociologist with Marxian leanings examining schooling may very well wish to take more account of the apparent forces which seem to require that music education students interact with one another in the fashion presented here (Sharp and Green, 1975; Goldman, 1969; Althusser, 1970; Willis, 1977). Much focus is given in Marxian accounts to political structures and the constrictions that structures make on social action. Certainly there are similarities to the "banding" in Willis' (1977) with the structural organizational "majors" such as performance and music education. Willis (1977:1) writes that "it is too facile simply to say that they have no choice". While many studies have looked into the primary and secondary school levels where students are required to attend, there may be a stronger case to make about this possible predeterminism suggested by Willis. But in post-secondary schooling students make very conscious decisions not only about attending but what they will study when they get there. We have seen instances where students have left the programme under study because they appear unable to negotiate a satisfactory identity. There is an apparent incompatibility in sociology between macro and micro analyses but as Reid (1986:34) writes,

while sociologists may identify with, or work within, a particular perspective, as in the case of the dilemma over the nature of social reality, they cannot deny others. Interpretative sociologists cannot ignore (or do so at their own peril) the fact that social behaviour takes place in social contexts which have structures and histories, any more than structuralists can deny the importance of subjective meanings and how people's actions affect social reality.

Each university in this study has a decidedly different structure yet the negotiation of a musician identity seems still to predominate in all of these institutions. It is apparent that in each location, students must take account of the structural elements of their social world but there does not appear to be any substantial evidence that they are in any real sense obligated by it. The academic or "official" structural elements of the music school have been thoroughly discussed openly in this thesis. The Actors, however, are still seen as constructing their own identity and meanings but by clearly taking into account the structural "realities" they perceive around them. Cicourel (1973), for example is reported by Sharp and Green (1975:23) to seem to "equate men's sense of social structure with the social structure itself. Reification is seen by many of the phenomenological sociologists (e.g. Keddie, 1971) as occurring at two levels. Sharp and Green (1975:13) suggest that these two are the "crystallization and objectivation of expectation within a community of interactors" and secondly as "crystallized typifications". This thesis has tried to avoid specifically the second of these two charges, not out of some "academic" loyalty or identification with some sociological perspective but because music education students cannot be seen as a "type" and all of the evidence provided in this analysis seems to support that assertion. They do not all have "typical" values and "typical" meanings. They do, on the other hand seem to construct quite similar strategies to deal with an apparently "symbolic community" standard expectation. But there is no doubt that they do take into account their social environment, either perceptual or structural. They seem to have a very clear idea of how the "community" views the performance "group" and how they "fit" into the greater social world in which they participate. The study has, however, acknowledged its predisposition to study the social construction of identity and not structure. There are still specific strengths offered by a symbolic

interactionist's perspective (Hargreaves, 1978:7-22). There are difficulties in linking Marx and Mead (Ropers, 1973) but Woods (1979:271) specifically adds to his list of field analysis "a consideration of the relationship of this model and its component parts to external forms and structures". He adds further that,

A danger in participant observation 'immersion' is 'macro-blindness'. Deep involvement in the scene can blind to external constraints and the researcher might find himself explaining things in their own terms when more powerful forces operating on the action lie elsewhere.

Thus Woods come to challenge whether Sharp and Green (1975:233) were engaged in grounded theory generation at all since as they readily admit that they "had left the field [when] many of the crucial insights emerged and with them the crystallizations of the overall approach to [their] accounting". But Sharp and Green admit specifically in the next breath that "we cannot claim to have done a piece of 'grounded theorizing' of the radically empirical variety Glaser and Strauss describe and claim to have adopted". Thus it is difficult to criticise them for what they have acknowledged they have knowingly not done. What confuses this issue seems to be the apparent acceptance of one perspective at the outset of their research and the ultimate re-evaluation after the fieldwork was completed. One senses the possibility that it did not turn out the way it was preordained and that the fieldwork did not appear to support some premise that these researchers took with them into the situation. Hargreaves (1978:11) writes that "SI/phenomenology do not assume that man is absolutely free". It would appear that Sharp and Green's retreat from the phenomenological world because of apparent structural constraints seems illegitimate. Thus this study searches for the structural perception by the actors and their own account of how this impinges on their own making sense of their social world.



The generalizability of any study can be challenged. In fact, it is common to see disclaimers warning the reader of such misuse of conclusions reached in a report of some investigation. No such warning will be offered here. Woods (1979:267) describes two approaches to ethnographic research as "idiographic", that is "descriptive of particular situations" and "nomothetic", that is "generalizing, comparative, theoretical". He concludes that these approaches are not mutually exclusive and that "we can have both rich and intensive description and generalizability". This study does not attempt to describe with accuracy any situation. However, in the exploration of the social world there is by default an accurate and indepth descriptive account given. The study's announced purpose, on the other hand, was to generate a theory to account for the on-going process of the construction of a musician identity. The theory was developed by taking into account data which was both "minimally" and "maximally" different (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Thus similarities in certain situations could be contrasted with stark differences in other situations. Spindler (1982:8) argues that studies are more generalizable to other similar situations and that an in-depth study of one place is markedly better than a superficial account from many settings. This study does not attempt to give a "typical" account nor an accurate description. Nor would a verification model be appropriate if applied to yet further situations. While every attempt is made at presenting an accurate description, it is not descriptive information that this report claims to offer, rather, a theoretical explanation for the construction of a musician identity. Thus, while the theory presented here may be modified, expanded or mutated, it should be applicable quite generally to any population of music education students. The method allows for triangulation by data source (Denzin, 1978:101) and method triangulation through interviewing and participant observation. The method

provided continuous monitoring of the students' social world during a critical period of six weeks as well as random periods of observation during the entire research period. Most importantly, the reporting is contextualized in the present actions of the Actors rather than solely in historical reconstructions and finally, it is a mode of symbolic interaction itself.

### Limitation

The failure to attain the very thing which is here under investigation, i.e. the quest for a successful musician identity, merits substantially more consideration than this research agenda is able to undertake. All of the students interviewed and the students observed were likely the more "successful" Actors at attaining their negotiated identity. The quest for a musician identity is a central strategy in the ongoing social processes of the music school. While it was possible to identify certain students who appeared to be having some difficulty in surmounting this quest, many others leave the music school altogether despite having gained admittance in the first instance. We are reminded of the figures provided earlier in the students' accounts of the large numbers of students who drop out of the programme. These students, however, were all successful at the entrance audition to the music school and did gain admittance to the music school. In order to fully exhaust the validation of the thesis presented herein, it would appear necessary to investigate why so many of these students leave the music school programme and to what extent their possible inability to negotiate a successful claim on a musician identity may contribute to their leaving.

## Review

This research attempts to build a theory in the grounded tradition (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to account for the interaction of music education students in Canadian universities as they come to construct an identity as "musician".

It has been suggested that what counts as school knowledge about music and music-making, Small's (1987) musicking, is not as unproblematic as might be thought at first (Witkin, 1974; Vulliamy, 1977; Small, 1987; Elliott, 1989). If, as has been suggested in the literature, some of the source of this disagreement stems from the teacher education period, then it becomes of some interest to systematically investigate the social world where this musical education takes place.

Canadian school music teachers are educated in the universities in a variety of programme models, some almost wholly controlled by music departments and others almost wholly controlled by education departments. But whatever the academic-political arrangement on the various university campuses might be, students all encounter some form of musical education under the guidance and instruction of university personnel who lay a claim as authorities in the academic discipline music. It is here, in the music schools of the universities, that these potential school music teachers construct their identity as a "musician". Music teachers claim to need "specialized skills and knowledge" (L'Roy, 1983) but the universal acceptance of the nature of these special skills and knowledge are challenged in the literature (L'Roy, 1983). Music schools at the universities appear to have adopted a fairly uniform core curriculum (Schmidt, 1986, 1989) and students who come into these university music

schools appear, at least on the surface, to accept the definition of a "musician" as it might be presumed to be understood in the "taken-for-granted world" (Schutz, 1953) of the music student. Whether or not this definition might be desirable for a school music teacher might be understood or taken as a social problem (Merton, 1982). This research deals more specifically with the sociological problem of how music education students come to construct their own version of an identity (McCall & Simmons, 1978; Lofland, 1969) as a "musician". The University of Western Ontario is proud of its motto that it makes "musicians first, teachers second". How do the potential music teachers "make" themselves into a musician? What social processes are involved in this pursuit of the construction of a "musician" identity? These are the central sociological issues addressed in this study.

It might be worth reminding ourselves that this type of inquiry is tied to the so-called "new sociology of education" in the U.K. and follows the tradition of such schooling case-studies as Hargreaves (1967), Lacey (1970), Sharp and Green (1975), Willis (1977), Woods (1979), Ball (1981), Burgess (1983), Pollard (1985) and Waterhouse (forthcoming). It is a study grounded in the perspectives and methods of sociology to answer questions raised in the discipline of music education.

From the perspective of teacher education generally, music teacher preparation might be viewed as an obvious anomaly because music teachers appear to be typically much more concerned about "being a musician" than a science teacher is concerned about "being a scientist". Thus it must be apparent that science teaching can be viewed as informed by science studies but that music teaching may be viewed as a function of a musician. That is to say that one cannot simply borrow the knowledge about music as one might with science, but rather, one must be a musician. Every

music education student in Canada is required to perform to some pre-set standard on an acceptable instrument, that being one with a "classical" repertoire.

The object of this inquiry came to be the development of a substantive grounded theory concerning the identity negotiation of student music teachers in the Canadian university system. "Substantive" has its meaning here from Glaser and Strauss (1967:32) as the development of a theory for a substantive or empirical area of sociological enquiry such as "professional education".

McCall and Simmons (1978) and Lofland (1969), both within the symbolic interactionism tradition, provided the basic starting point for the development in this thesis of the concept of role-identity. Central to this concept is the idea that a person devises an identity for himself and that can be an identity as one wishes to be seen. Furthermore, in the event that one does not attempt to claim an identity, it is suggested that an identity will be provided for one by Other. In fact, it is seen that Other can "force" an identity on Person. This is of critical concern here since so much of the development of the theory depends upon the societal reaction of others and their ability to acknowledge one's claim as a "musician". From among the many differing role-identities that one has, as father, brother etc., there appears an order to the importance of these various identities and typically one will come to take

prominence. This is critical in this thesis since it has been suggested that the "musician" identity becomes this very prominent one for which support and validation is sought. Music education students seem to need a "career" approach to the validation of their "musician" identity since it appears that no single, nor combination of single acts of "musicking" can validate the claim on a "once-and-for-all" basis. Lofland (1969:124) suggests that this prominent category which one is claiming for face-to-face interaction with others becomes a "pivotal" category that eventually becomes that which defines a person, i.e. says who a person is. This is important because it has been suggested in the literature (Elliott, 1989b:12) that music is something that people "are" and not just simply something that people do. Hence we return to Lofland (1969:127) who suggests that this "being" a category of person becomes a person's identity. The analysis of the identity constructed by music education students as a "musician" seems most congruent with the formulation of deviant identities where these appear to consume the individual. Hargreaves (1976:204) refers to this as the engulfment of the individual into this pivotal category.

For the music education student in the music school, the desire to be viewed so centrally, pivotally, essentially or really a "musician" is the major concern of this thesis. Much of the ability to claim this core identity comes from the imputation by others as well as self-as-other. This notion of imputation derives from the labelling perspective and this perspective has been shown to provide a seminal theoretical basis

which helps to explain the stigma attached to being a devalued musician in the music school.

This study examines the social construction of a musician identity in the group of students preparing for a professional career as a school teacher of music. At every university, this group of students comes to interact with other music students, that is those groups majoring in performance, theory, composition or musicology. In this study, with the exception of the University of Alberta, all of these music students share some sort of curricular common first year or two. Their allegiance appears strongly aligned with the music school and they see themselves as a single "music" group on campus. They identify themselves externally as "music students" and they see themselves viewed as some sort of special group on campus. They report that they believe they are seen as a distinct group on campus. They report that they are seen by "outsiders" as weird, strange or unusual. They believe that they are misunderstood.

The students have a ritual entrance to the social world of the university musician and they report that they are accepted almost instantly by the other music students into the social world of the music school. They became part of the "in-group" (Sumner, 1904). So pervasive is this sense of insulation from the rest of the campus, that the music school was seen as comparable to Goffman's "total institution". One major determinant of this acceptance is reported to be an "official" invitation by the university itself. Students who are not accepted into the various music programmes, such and those simply taking an occasional music course, are not typically admitted to the social world of the music students. In fact, students at MUN who were not admitted to the programme reported that they were systematically rejected by the other music students. Music students referred to others, that is non-music students as

"outsiders" or "foreigners". They likened the music school to "family" and often referred to it as a "little high school". Not atypical was the expression from the music students that they did not feel part of the university as a whole but rather as part of this small music world.

The situation at the University of Alberta was substantially different. There, the music education students had their primary registration in the Faculty of Education and reportedly found social interaction in the music school very difficult. Despite the common acceptance that students in the same courses would by necessity become close socially, the students at the U of A never seem to be able to join the social world of the music students at all. Thus there is a clear indication that something more vital was at stake than simply sharing common classes in music theory or history might suggest. In fact, more than in any of the other institutions, the music education students at the U of A felt rejected musically and socially by those students with whom one might rightly suppose they had most in common.

Music education students report three recurring themes about the campus music world. The first is a parental concern that the study of music does not have the kind of occupational security that might be seen in medicine or engineering. Thus for many students, the occupationally tied programme of music education can be presented as more promising with respect to a future in the area of music. The second theme is an apparent view of others holding the study of music as either frivolous or easy, confined to a simple playing of instruments. This theme irritates music students so much because they see themselves almost bound to the study of music. They frequently report the enormous number of daily hours given over to satisfying the requirements of the music programme. The last theme is one that music students



frequently report and concerns itself with their apparent belief that they, as music students, are seen by others as weird, different or otherwise deviant.

It is to this last theme that the analysis turns. For if as Becker (1973) claims, that deviance is not a quality of the act but the application of a label to the act by others, then clearly music students must view themselves as deviant. It is to the societal reaction of the labelling perspective that the attention turns. Students are typically aware of these concerns and their subsequent actions must surely take into account this perception. Both interaction within and beyond must surely be affected by these perceptions that music students are definitionally deviant. Students report on instances in the university residences where their status as musicians is questioned for rigour and as being normal. Outsiders were never seen as understanding that the music programme required substantial non-performance areas of scholarship. This leads music students to support each other even more strongly. It was, in fact, Becker (1963) who first developed the notion of musicians as deviants. He claimed that although their "activities were within the law, their culture and way of life were sufficiently bizarre and unconventional for them to be labelled as outsiders". The music students themselves often reported feeling different or that others in the music school were weird, odd or eccentric. Becker (1963:85) concluded that "the musician is conceived of as an artist who possesses a mysterious gift setting him apart from all other people". Music students saw each other as deviant and believed others looking in at their world saw them as deviant.

However, as their social career progressed in the music school, music education students soon came to understand that there were differences between music students. Music education students soon acknowledged being a sub-group. Life on the inside

was not an egalitarian utopia. Although every student seemed to be acknowledged into this more global music world of the music school, once "in", various other factors seem to take on an ever-increasing importance for the social interaction of the students. Hargreaves (1975) writes that once one considers a group, it is the differences between the members that is stressed. The "key notion in this process of differentiation is that members are ranked into a set of hierarchies, by which in certain respects some members are more valued by the group than are other members" (p.97). Music education students become "marginal-insiders". They are accepted into the music school but denied access to the sanctuary.

Goffman (1967) studies the ways in which people "make points" in everyday interaction. Music education students seem to operate with an implied normative standard with their attempts to collect points which they use to demonstrate their claim on the status of "musician". Unlike other professional statuses which appear to be granted as a once-and-for-always, the status of musician seems to be one which requires constant renegotiation through the critical reaction of Other during interaction. The label "musician" is conferred by audiences, i.e. Others, who affect one's claim to the right of Self to adopt this identity. Music education students appear to collect "points" to help legitimate their right to make such a claim.

In order to better understand why there may be some question as to the legitimacy of a claim on a musician identity in the music school, the social construct of "musician" was examined. Because the social definition of a "musician" appeared to be so diverse and lacking any substantial consensus, it might be suggested that there are infinite varieties of "musician", each with a slightly different compositional configuration with perhaps "invisible boundaries" (Cohen, 1985). These are

nevertheless taken as meaningful for each of the students seeking to be identified as or labelled as a "musician" by Other. It became important to acknowledge that a pre-established social category "musician" was not the same as the infinitely variable and socially constructed "musician".

Part of the social construction of a "musician" identity was influenced by the genre of music that Actor associated himself with. "Classical" music was seen as supreme but certain kinds of this genre were also called into question. Very "weird" sounding modern music seldom influenced the construct for example. Students reported a concern about the obvious absence of other genre of music in the music school and sensed a certain negative impact on their claim on musician identity with their identification with most of these other musical genre, rock of course being the most serious.

All students were expected to "perform" music and it was in the performance aspect of the social world that music education students reported the most difficulty in claiming their identity. One major source of difficulty was their perception of themselves as a stigmatised or devalued performer, largely compared to the "performance major". Since performing was seen as so central to the social construct of a musician, the perceived barrier to the identity claim through "sponsored" models of social interaction was a common theme among the music education majors.

Music education students seem to construct a notion of "talent" so as to give themselves an equal footing in the music school. They typically consider themselves the "potential" equal as a performer and trace the possible lack of demonstrable skill to a number of reasons other than a basic "talent" issue. Thus "talent" is seen by

music education students as "being there" and the acceptance to the music school in the first instance is often reported as proof for that conclusion.

In an examination of "view of Self" it was shown that the connection for music students between "self" and "music" appears to be one between "self/musician" and "self-worth". Therefore to be considered a "good" musician has very serious considerations in the music school because of this perceived sameness concerning performance prowess and personal worth. Therefore the quest in the music school for a "musician" identity became the next central focus. A working definition for "identity" was borrowed principally from McCall and Simmons (1978) and Lofland (1969) and developed further from Hargreaves whose particular contribution was the concept of role "engulfment". A close examination of referent Others and Reference groups, both normative and comparative was undertaken which showed how students took into account the views of other students as well as their teachers, particularly their major instrument "applied" teacher.

A detailed examination of the student strategies used to make the claim as a musician was followed by a discussion of how students recognized clues that a successful claim had been made and that an identity had been conferred.

In order to fully test the developing theory, it was tested against cases where students see their claim on the musician identity challenged and also for those students whose claim seems to "fail" completely.

In conclusion, a theory to account for the social action of music students in their construction of a musician identity was generated underpinned by the labelling

perspective. Music education students appear to make such a claim on an identity as a musician in the music school perhaps largely because of the perception of the worth of the individual being encompassed within the nature of the musical performance skills of the student. This identity construction depends substantially more on the conferring by Others than on a self claim. The students are expected to "announce" (Stone, 1970) their claim and they then take account of the societal response to that claim. The musician identity is never seen as a once-and-for-all achievement but requires a process orientation to a "career" as a musician. Music education students seek to be labelled a musician and depend upon a positive societal reaction to validate their on-going claim as a musician in their own socially constructed version of their identity.

## Notes for Chapter Thirteen

- 1.see Becker's account of this in "Field Work Evidence" (1970:43)
- 2.see Downey, M. (1977:58-59) for a position on self-concept and self-esteem.
- 3.Other universities are represented in the Education class at UWO but only graduates of the UWO programme were interviewed.

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# Postscript

When Woods (1979:256) writes that "a full discussion of the practical significance of this study falls outside the boundaries of this book", I believe he echoes the frustrations of many researchers. Like Woods, I will permit myself a last personal statement with respect to this study and its implications. This research began as a result of my own perception of a problem in the discipline of music education in Canadian Universities. I keep asking myself if there can be any reasonably logical justification for the multitude of delivery systems for music education programmes that we have in our university system. Surely if universities are committed to providing the best possible programmes to students that they can, there would be some attempts to examine, empirically, some of the claims made by the various universities with respect to their perception of the best delivery methods. Further to that difficulty, the graduate music specialist in Canada must, one presumes, and taking the position of McCall and Simmons (1978) must develop an identity for himself in order to rest his claims on his professional orientation and perhaps satisfaction. There have been efforts to assess this job satisfaction as a function of identity such as Moller (1981) who looked at role perceptions of secondary school music educators and the resultant effect on job satisfaction. Further complicating the matter is the wide variation in expectations from the school systems over which each Canadian province has jurisdiction. In Newfoundland, for example, we seem still

committed to music specialists in the primary and elementary schools. In Ontario, the classroom teacher has this responsibility. There is little practical way for a classroom teacher to deliver the curriculum that we have developed in Newfoundland with the specialist teacher in mind. Does our teacher education programme reflect this difference? Our Faculty of Education has recently developed a new mission statement and one of the major problems facing the Faculty was whether the statement should say, and that we should mean, that our Faculty prepares teachers for just Newfoundland or for much wider national perspectives. In music education, this has serious curricular implications since our primary and elementary music specialists will not find teaching posts as specialists in some other provinces.

Therefore I set out to look at the nature of the preparation of the music education student in the Canadian university system. One of my initial concerns is the apparent large number of American nationals serving as faculty in Canadian university music departments (Roberts, 1986). The overwhelming majority of faculty positions in Canada are held by American nationals or Canadians who have their graduate work from an American institution. I was curious to discover just what influence that had on the national characteristics of Canadian music education as presented in the teacher education programmes in this country. As this investigation proceeded, I became more and more aware that there were other issues that seemed more central to the beginnings of this quest. We had no literature at all which examined the social reality of the music education students at all. Aside from not having any evidence with which to comment on the specific "American" influence upon the students studying to be

music teachers, we had no information about any possible influences on these students inside their social world. Thus with the encouragement of Schatzman and Strauss (1973:3) who write, "As an aside, for those students who may not have this kind of training - for example, those in the service professions - we would add the following: Since they also want to do research of a social science cast, but do not wish to spend years steeping themselves in the traditions of social science, we would say that it is entirely legitimate and practical to pursue their interests without the necessity for articulating precise problems drawn from the social science literature" and with the encouragement of my supervisor Dr. Stephen Waterhouse, that I dove into this particular research project. Two questions remained however. The first was, just how many years does it take to "steep" oneself and secondly was the growing realisation that one cannot approach the discipline of sociology as an "outsider" any easier than one might approach the discipline of music. Thus there would be no substantive answers to be reported if the entire research regime kept firmly locked inside the music education traditional perspectives. If the results of such a large research programme were to be taken seriously, they simply must look legitimate within the discipline that provided the framework. Also, since it is unlikely that the results in this thesis will be accepted at face value, if at all, the research must be seen as strongly generalizable as possible. Without this, the music education community might rightly turn and say something to the effect that "It may be that way where you are, but it surely is not like that here!". I believe therefore that one of the greater strengths of this research has been the rather wide variety of institutions that I have looked at. This allowed the development of a theoretical posturing that required a synthesis of

varying perspectives and forced me to look beyond local issues at any one of the institutions. I believe that this alone has raised my own expectations as to the validity and strength of the arguments presented herein. There are of course always negative sides to any posture. It was impossible to develop a really deep analysis of a single institution such as most of the sociological studies which predate this one have done. The kind of intricate analysis that Woods (1979) was able to develop for Lowfield or the kind of analysis that Willis (1977) was able to develop about the "lads" is conspicuously missing in this thesis largely because of the lack of commonality among the institutions. What appeared to me to be important was not those things which bound the various institutions to their own individual perspectives, such as the "practice bunnies" at UWO, but rather a serious look at the social construction of reality as seemed apparent in all of the institutions in whatever form they might appear. Thus I believe that I have been able to unfold a perception of a more universal theory to account for social action as "music education students" more globally might understand it. This, of course, limits the opportunities to explore in detail some of the other issues which may in certain institutions appear to be of particular importance.

My other concern or preoccupation was to try to strike a balance between the music education perspective and the sociological perspective. What the "musician" may see as an attack on his domain by a sociologist and therefore be able to dismiss the results because, as Becker writes in his forward to Shepherd et al. (1977:xiii) has so poignantly pointed out, the sociologist could not possibly understand the issues



anyway, is a real concern. For what possible use might a postulation concerning music education be if it is dismissed at the outset because of a lack of trust in an "outside" discipline. Becker (1963:206) has also discussed the problems associated with investigations of institutions generally when he writes,

Such research has [a] special moral sting to it when it allows us to inspect the practice of an institution in the light of its own professed aims and its own preferred descriptions of what it is about.

It is clear from this research that where Schools of Music profess to undertake the education of music teachers that students still see their own task as primarily to develop an identity as a performer and certainly not as a teacher. This revelation will not be received well in many places and thus my problem is to balance delicately, as I said before, the perspective of the sociologist and the music educationist. If the study and the theoretical perspective do not seem to fall responsibly into the sociological camp, then the greater academic community in education may distrust the outcome as further evidence of what Becker (1963:86) describes as the typical musician's position that he "ought not to be subject to the control of outsiders".

Hopefully I have succeeded in being reasonably agile enough to balance this study as a result of my perception of these difficulties.

There are in my view many problems left unanswered. L’Roy (1983:183) has suggested that music education has its own significant gestures and symbols which are different than the musician-performer and that gaps seem to appear in the education of teachers of music. Many musicians at the university level appear to hold the position that the teaching of music is something that a musician does and is therefore part of the definition of one’s identity as a musician. Others disagree. While the issues of school knowledge might illuminate some of these problems, we have already seen the real hostility raised by one sociologist, Vulliamy, through the writings of one music educator, Swanwick (1988). These encampments are about a real issue and further enquiry into the reasons that these sides apparently cannot come together is indicated. Not only do university musicians generally refuse to acknowledge the intrusions of other forms of explanation as to what might be considered music, they also appear equally uninterested in considering what part of music making and instruction is the more obviously within the jurisdiction of the educational sciences. How do students learn music? What do they learn about music? Many writers have claimed answers to these questions. Witkin (1974) makes a strong case for the relationship between teacher training and school practice. He does not examine this any further but leaves us with the impression that it is as he suggest. I believe that much of what he implies is demonstrated empirically herein. Yet as recently as Swanwick (1988:101) we read that "it is neither true nor helpful to music education to assume with Graham Vulliamy and John Shepherd that everything about music is socially determined". Swanwick builds his case for an appropriate music education not only by failing to take account of Vulliamy’s position but by dismissing it altogether.

In Canada, David Elliott (1989b:11) from the University of Toronto writes on the other hand that many young people visibly proclaim their music and that "they wear their music like a bold team badge". I am also reminded by Elliott of Bruno Nettl's (1983:293) observation that in some cultures musical 'secrets' are actually guarded from outsiders. If Schools of Music with their apparent very narrow perception of what counts as music are left to design and deliver programmes in music teacher education, will other world musical genres be incorporated into the identity complex of the future teacher in the same way that it apparently is to many of the Schools of Music. Can we dismiss Small's (1987) perception of the current situation in classical music field and that of the Afro-American tradition?

I believe that on the strength of the sociological arguments made herein that music educationists will have to take a second look. I believe that the position developed in this thesis represents a "reality" which seriously challenges many of the assumptions that are made in the university" about teacher education in music. I have no doubt that some will not be convinced.

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