



Playing the changes:

**An expanded view of higher music education through
the use of collaborative learning and teaching**

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Abstract

In Australia, higher music education faces challenging times— university reform has ushered in an era of public accountability and budget cuts; the sector has become portfolio career-focussed and a university education must prepare students for uncertain futures. Within higher music education, collaborative learning has been identified as one way to address these types of challenges. There has recently been increased interest in the use of collaborative learning in a variety of higher music education contexts. To date, however, collaborative learning for music practice or performance in higher music education remains little used and under-researched.

Situated within a practitioner inquiry framework, this study employed narrative approaches to discover participants' experiences of collaborative learning in first year music practice courses at the University of Southern Queensland, a regional Australian university. The participants in this study were students who completed the first year music practice courses in 2014 and the teacher/researcher. Preliminary research during 2012 and a pilot study in 2013 shaped the focus and design of the study. Data were collected from students' essays, journals and short answer questionnaires. Teacher's data took the form of a teacher/researcher diary. Thematic analysis of students' essays and journals established the ways in which collaborative learning built students' individual and collective agency. Narrative analysis of the entire data set was undertaken to develop a robust picture of the value created through learning music practice collaboratively.

Students experienced collaborative learning as an expansive process

for musical and personal development. Learning through informal social participation within heterogeneous peer groups built students' individual agency. Student learning outcomes included the acquisition of new musical skills, but also extended to shifts in identity and personal transformation. Furthermore, collaborative learning built collective agency. As collaborative musical action and a shared focus on practice were established, students developed mutual musical goals and thereby discovered new ways of knowing the world through exploring and affirming collective identity. In addition to increasing student agency, collaborative learning created value for students and the teacher/researcher. The primary source of value creation for students was social relationships with peers. This finding supported the findings on agency. The value created for the teacher/researcher was also linked to increased teacher agency. The teacher/researcher experienced collaborative learning as highly creative and improvisatory. As a pedagogical model rooted in improvisation, collaborative learning was likened throughout the study to playing the changes in jazz. This metaphor was extended to refer to collaborative learning's potential to creatively and constructively respond to the systemic, institutional and cultural challenges facing higher music education.

In response to these findings, the teacher/researcher engaged in paradigm reflection on the nature and purpose of teaching and learning music practice in this context. This reflection revealed that collaborative learning expanded learning and teaching practice by constructively disrupting traditional notions of authority, knowledge, power and expertise. Because of the essential and valued role students played in learning and

teaching, this study recommends that collaborative learning in this location be more accurately described as *collaborative learning and teaching*.

Reflection also resulted in an expansion of the ends or purpose of music practice education to include and value non-musical outcomes such as shifts in personal identity and transformative personal experiences.

Context is acknowledged as a limitation to the broader applicability of these findings, however, given the challenges facing higher music education they may be of interest to researchers of collaborative learning and practitioners teaching in a range of higher music education contexts. Due to collaborative learning's ability to address both issues of cost and pedagogical challenges, future research in this area might focus on the use of collaborative learning for music practice in higher music education contexts different to the study site, such as conservatoria and large metropolitan institutions.

A number of issues were beyond the scope of this study. This study did not examine the experiences of students who did not complete the 2014 academic year in first year music practice. As a result, the possible links between collaborative learning and students' decisions to discontinue music practice study were not considered; this issue could form the subject of future research. Such research may uncover the potential difficulties collaborative learning poses for certain students and may enable the development of collaborative learning practices to address these issues. Longitudinal research might examine the role collaborative learning plays in fostering a life-long interest in music or in students' future personal

development.

Participants' experiences of collaborative learning in this study reflected the essential characteristics of collaborative learning as described in the literature and in terms of learning outcomes, demonstrated social learning theory in action. However, beyond merely confirming existing knowledge about collaborative learning, the significance of this study lies in the use and investigation of collaborative learning within an educational context where collaborative processes have not been prominent. In light of the challenges facing higher music education today, participants' experiences of collaborative learning in this study indicate that it is a pedagogical model worthy of consideration and further investigation. Collaborative learning and teaching for music practice or performance in higher music education is an under-utilised pedagogical model which, when used in appropriate contexts, has the potential to play a transformative role in the lives of both students and teachers.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

The referencing and citing system used in this thesis follows the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa Forbes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Melissa Forbes

December 2015

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Glossary of Acronyms and Terms

BCA	Bachelor of Creative Arts
B Mus	Bachelor of Music
collaborative learning	More than simply working in small groups, collaborative learning recognizes that knowledge is socially constructed within a community of knowledgeable peers. The authority of knowledge is shared among community members and members learn from their interactions with each other (Bruffee, 1999). Collaborative learning is the pedagogical model upon which the learning community of 2014 was based.
community of practice	“a learning partnership among people who find it useful to learn from and with each other about a particular domain” (Wenger, Trayner, & de Laat, 2011, p. 9; see also Wenger (1998))
the conservatoire model	A model for music education which originated in Paris at the Conservatoire Nationale de Musique et d’Art Dramatique (founded in 1783), whereby students learned an instrument, voice or composition in a master-apprentice setting. Later adapted by English schools of music in the 19 th century (“Conservatory: Musical institution”, 2015).
the framework OR the Wenger, Trayner, and de Laat (2011) framework	<i>Promoting and Assessing Value Creation in Communities and Networks: A Conceptual Framework</i> by Etienne Wenger, Beverly Trayner and Maarten de Laat
HME	Higher music education—refers to music education at tertiary/university level

The 2014 learning community	The community of participants in MUI1001 and MUI1002
MUI1001	Music Practice 1, the semester one course in which student participants were enrolled
MUI1002	Music Practice 1, the semester two course in which student participants were enrolled
music practice	The applied aspects of studying music. Practice in this context involves, amongst other things, playing an instrument or singing within a small group; rehearsing for performances; arranging music; preparing lead sheets. <i>Music practice</i> , as defined here, is differentiated from but admittedly related to an individual's personal practice of music in order to improve performance.
one-to-one	A pedagogical model where students learn an instrument, singing or composition from a teacher on an individual basis
participants	Students enrolled in MUI1001 and MUI1002 in 2014 who completed both semesters of study and me, their teacher
program	A university degree offer, for example, the Bachelor of Creative Arts program
USQ	University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia—the study site
value	The learning that is enabled by participation in a learning community
value indicators	Events, experiences, metrics, performance, attendance and other data which evidence the learning enabled by community participation

value creation matrix

A conceptual representation of the combination of value indicators and value creation stories. Designed to provide a robust depiction of the value created by participating in a community of practice.

value creation stories

A genre of story depicting the ways in which learning is enabled by participating in a community of practice. The stories are the result of narrative analysis of participants' experiences.

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[W]e should begin to think about college and university education in a way that is quite different from the way we have thought about it in the past. We should think of it as a process of cultural change. And we should think of college and university teachers as agents of cultural change . . . to serve effectively as agents of cultural change, teachers have to organize students to learn collaboratively. And for collaborative learning to work, college and university teachers have to examine and revise longstanding assumptions that we all hold about what teachers do and why they do it.

Kenneth Bruffee, *Collaborative learning: Higher education, interdependence, and the authority of knowledge*, (1993), p. vii

I'd been getting bored with the stereotyped changes that were being used all the time at the time, and I kept thinking there's bound to be something else. I could hear it sometimes but I couldn't play it . . . I found that by using the higher intervals of a chord as a melody line and backing them with appropriately related changes I could play the thing I'd been hearing. I came alive.

Charlie Parker

Prologue

The University of Southern Queensland (USQ) is an Australian regional university which first offered a Bachelor of Music (B Mus) in 1994 (University of Southern Queensland Faculty of Arts, 2001). The content and pedagogy of the B Mus were based on the conservatoire model, with instrumental and vocal students receiving an hour per week of one-to-one tuition.

In 2009, the B Mus was replaced by a Bachelor of Creative Arts (BCA), in which students could major in one of four creative arts disciplines—music, theatre, creative media or visual arts. The BCA and B Mus had different program objectives. The B Mus emphasised advanced performance or instrumental teaching, whereas the BCA focused on more generic discipline-based skills and knowledge (University of Southern Queensland, 2009). From an administrative perspective, the purpose of the BCA was to reduce the overall number of courses offered in the creative arts. Funding for one-to-one tuition was not specifically an issue. Courses involving one-to-one tuition were therefore retained within the BCA.

With the introduction of the BCA, the profile of the students changed. It was common for students to audition for the BCA with little prior formal learning of music theory (see also Feichas, 2010). Increasingly, students were auditioning with contemporary repertoire (see also Väkevä & Westerlund, 2007) and many were self-taught, for example, by watching YouTube videos, or had little to no formal practical music tuition. This is in contrast to other higher music education contexts where students have

received, in some cases, extensive individual tuition prior to tertiary music studies (e.g. Daniel, 2001; Lebler, Burt-Perkins, & Carey, 2009). Some students auditioned by playing or singing original material. In addition, due to the inter-disciplinary options built into the BCA, some first year students were theatre majors who took the music practice courses as electives. It was again common for these students to have no prior formal music training. More generally, USQ's student profile includes many first-in-family and lower socio-economic students who may have had limited learning opportunities prior to commencing at USQ (Thomas, 2013; see also Forbes, 2013). Taking all these factors into account, it had become unreasonable at USQ to expect students to "fit neatly into the traditional expectations" of conservatoire training (Lebler et al., 2009, p. 232).

Given many BCA music students' interest in and practice of popular music, the use of the traditional one-to-one model tuition seemed an unusual fit. Learning popular music in self-directed, self-motivated ways is not unusual (Green, 2001) and this is frequently conducted in informal settings such as school rehearsal rooms, at home, or now, with the advent of smart phones and other devices, anywhere. The more formal learning environment of one-to-one was at odds with students' experiences of learning music informally. The issue was not the one-to-one model itself. Rather, there was a disconnect between the immediate educational context of the BCA and the one-to-one model for music practice.

In response to these specific factors, a collaborative model for first year music practice courses was introduced in 2012. At the time, the model

was referred to as a *performance workshop model* (Gearing & Forbes, 2013). Students were taught as a cohort through weekly classes. I taught these classes with a colleague. Classes were a combination of “all-in” workshops and rehearsal time for small student ensembles. The repertoire morphed from being classical to popular in focus. We provided instrument-specific group classes to support students on their instruments or voice and this is still a feature of the classes at the time of writing. There were no individual lessons for first years starting in 2012 though students in higher year levels still received lessons.

The introduction of collaborative learning created a cultural shift at USQ. Research conducted during 2012 with a colleague indicated that the performance workshop model had created many positive effects (Gearing & Forbes, 2013). Collaboration had created a sense of excitement and musical purpose, both individual and collective and students had begun to take responsibility for their own learning (Gearing & Forbes, 2013).

Prior to commencing this study, my experience with collaborative learning at USQ was that it involved more than just learning to play music together. Participation affected students in ways I found difficult to articulate. Aspects of collaborative learning also challenged my beliefs, assumptions, values and practices as an educator. I commenced this study to discover, describe, analyse and critically reflect upon our experiences of collaborative learning for first year music practice at USQ. These experiences capture both the value and challenges of collaborative learning for music practice. Whilst our experiences were borne out of the USQ

context, they may resonate with other practitioners of collaborative learning, or alternatively, prompt practitioners to consider the use of collaborative learning in similar contexts.

Chapter 1. Introduction

This study arose from my desire to better understand the complexities of collaborative learning within one higher music education (HME) context. Working within a practitioner inquiry framework, I use narrative approaches to discover participants' experiences of collaborative learning for first year music practice courses during 2014 at USQ. The participants in this study are students who completed the music practice courses in 2014 and myself as teacher/researcher.

As practitioner research, context—both broad and specific—is of critical relevance in this study (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Music education is viewed in this study as a local community, with its own sense of place, time, processes and purposes (Jorgensen, 1995). Such a view places the emphasis on the individual participants in music education—both teachers and students—in relation to, rather than isolated from, the world around them. Viewing music education as community enables us to situate a particular learning community temporally, geographically, socially and culturally and to view that community in relation to both the tradition of music education and its “here-and-now” demands. An understanding of context enables us to highlight and appreciate differences and similarities, but perhaps more importantly, to better understand the ways in which “our very notion of music and music education is *conditioned*” (Westerlund, 2002, p. 19).

Within this broad practitioner inquiry framework, this study uses narrative approaches. Narrative inquiry is well suited to and widely used in

educational research (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009b; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1995; Webster & Mertova, 2007) and is a useful tool for professional development (Conle, 2000, 2001). Narrative inquiry has been identified as a research approach which is “deeply relational and committed to the pursuit of questions of educational significance—questions that challenge taken-for-granted notions of the nature of life and learning in and through music” (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009b, p. 16). Stories are one of the most powerful ways to make sense of the world around us because they provide rich, thick descriptions of human experiences as situated action (Polkinghorne, 1995). The stories presented here emphasise the intensely social nature of learning music collaboratively (Cangro, 2015; Jorgensen, 1993). In telling these stories, I seek to illuminate how these complex interactions contribute to learning (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b; Wenger, 1998). I search for connections and commonalities amongst these stories, but I also recognise that “different perspectives, voices, and experiences exist and *can inform*” (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009a, p. 2).

Narrative inquiry is used in this study to interrogate commonplaces (Jorgensen, 2003b), trouble certainty (Clandinin, 2009) and examine questions of educational significance (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009b). Narrative inquiry is recognised as “a way to shift the dominant social narrative of music education, to make it more responsive, more inclusive of the lives of all people, regardless of who they are and how they are positioned on the landscape” (Clandinin, 2009, pp. 207–208). The use of narrative approaches within a practitioner inquiry framework is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

In order to better understand the complexities of collaborative learning, I use two theoretical tools—Karlsen’s (2011) sociologically-inspired musical agency lens and the conceptual framework of Wenger, Trayner, and de Laat (2011) for promoting and assessing value in networks and communities. These theoretical tools and their relationship to Wenger’s (1998) social theory of learning are discussed in Chapter 2. The results of their application are presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

1.1 Rationale and focus

My desire to understand the complexities of collaborative learning for music practice at USQ situates this study within the emerging field of collaborative learning in HME. Within educational psychology more broadly, the works of Vygotsky (1978), Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) have influenced understanding of the nature of learning as social and situated and of the role communities of practice play in learning (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b). The field of collaborative learning views learning as a cultivation of shared goals and problem solving, rather than understanding learning as an event isolated within individuals (Bruffee, 1999; Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b; Wenger, 1998). Collaborative learning is based on the assumption that learning is in large part a result of social participation (Wenger, 1998). Despite these developments, socio-cultural models of learning have not been prominent in HME (Gaunt & Westerlund,

2013b).¹ This study adopts a social theory of learning to highlight factors within the ecology of learning and teaching beyond content or skills transmission from teacher to student (Wenger, 1998). Theory is thus used as a lens through which to view, describe and analyse a different way of learning and teaching within HME for other practitioners in the field.

The recently published *Collaborative Learning in Higher Music Education* is both a catalyst and scaffold for change in HME (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b), but it is also an inspiration for further research in this field. HME today faces systemic, institutional and cultural challenges (Daniel, 2001; Gaunt, 2013; Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b; Sloboda, 2011). One of the greatest challenges facing HME is the high cost of delivering one-to-one tuition. Cost reduction was achieved at USQ by reducing the number of courses offered within the creative arts, including music. Perhaps due to its regional location and relatively small student numbers, funding for one-to-one tuition was not specifically targeted at USQ. However, the high cost of individual tuition has been a significant challenge at other institutions in Australia, the most recent and high profile examples being the School of Music at the Australian National University and the Elder Conservatorium in Adelaide, South Australia (Australian National University, 2012; Loussikian, 2015). Whilst collaborative learning is less costly to deliver than one-to-one tuition, this should not be its sole point of

¹ Examples of socio-cultural models of learning in HME in the literature are discussed in Chapter 2.

recommendation to educators and administrators. Pedagogically, collaborative learning has been identified as one way to deal with these and other challenges “creatively and constructively” (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b, p. 3). The nature and potential of collaborative learning for HME has however remained on the margins and little researched (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b). This study contributes to this emerging body of knowledge on the use of collaborative learning in HME.

Given the strong relationship between HME and the conservatoire tradition,² the relative absence of collaborative learning in HME is understandable and explains why research on collaborative learning is limited. Pedagogical practices for music practice or performance within HME are largely based on established conservatoire practices which emphasize the development of the individual’s contribution through the one-to-one model (Bjøntegaard, 2015; Carey & Grant, 2015; Carey, Grant, McWilliam, & Taylor, 2013; Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b; Lebler, 2007; Virkkula, 2015). Ensemble studies such as orchestras, choirs, bands, and chamber groups within the conservatoire have also tended to mimic the one-to-one model in a group setting (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b), however it is acknowledged that some student-led, non-conducted ensembles and chamber groups in conservatoires can display at least some characteristics

² Sloboda (2011) notes in relation to the British context that conservatoires do not have a monopoly on the training of musicians and that this work is also done in universities and colleges. At least in British and Australian contexts, it is generally assumed that HME involves the practical training of musicians through participation in music practice or performance studies, as distinct from studying about music. I acknowledge that in Europe HME is usually seen as distinct from the conservatoire.

of collaborative learning.

Virkkula (2015) recently examined the role of communities of practice in Finnish conservatories. He concludes that communities of practice “appear very interesting” (p. 12) for arts education and that further research could seek to explain the ways in which formal music education is bound up in tradition: “What kind of outcomes would the communal development of conservatory activities lead to as an expansive process from the viewpoint of competence development in both teachers and students?” (p. 12). This study responds to the question raised by Virkkula (2015), albeit using a different focus to “competence development”.³ This study focuses on understanding the complexities of participants’ experiences, rather than competence development per se. Nonetheless, these findings provide a source for critical reflection on the ways in which formal music education—in this case, HME at USQ—is influenced by tradition.

Undertaking this critical reflection responds to Gaunt and Westerlund’s (2013b) call for HME practitioners to adopt an inquiry stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) towards their practice. Gaunt and Westerlund view an inquiry stance as requiring practitioners to not only constantly improve existing practices, but to extend “preexisting realities through reflection and challenging established forms of education and

³ Given the nature of Virkkula’s (2015) study, I assume that because he refers to “competence development” he is suggesting more research into the ways in which collaborative work builds musical skills in students and pedagogical skills in teachers. As will be discussed further in this study, this study contributes knowledge on the latter, but only indirectly to the former.

expertise [in HME] creatively and constructively” (p. 3). Gaunt and Westerlund link the concept of an inquiry stance—“the tension between reflection within and beyond professional cultures” (p. 3)—with Sloboda’s (2011) professional and paradigm reflection. Professional reflection involves looking at ways to better achieve agreed goals and paradigm reflection requires a review of the goals themselves.⁴ Sloboda contends that most professionals should be engaged in professional reflection most of the time. In times of rapid social change, however, Sloboda argues that paradigm reflection becomes particularly important. From a methodological perspective, Barrett and Stauffer (2009a) contend that narrative inquiry is a way to re-conceptualise how we think about engagement in music, music education and music education research itself. Narrative inquiry thus affords the researcher a useful research approach as well as a means of critical reflection on practice. In this study, I use my understanding of our experiences of collaborative learning as a source for both professional and paradigm reflection (Gaunt, 2013; Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b; Sloboda, 2011).

In terms of the focus of this study, the literature identifies the need for more music education research from the angle of experience (Karlsen, 2011; Westerlund, 2008). The literature in support of this focus is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. This focus on experience, which includes my own

⁴ Gaunt (2013) notes that historically, neither type of reflection has been prominent within HME. This is likely because of the tacit nature of musicians’ knowledge, the isolation of teachers within HME particularly within the one-to-one model and a lack of research into developmental processes (Gaunt, 2013; see also Gaunt, 2008).

experiences as teacher, reveals the broader philosophical assumptions which I hold as researcher—that reality is multiple and seen or experienced through many different perspectives (Barret & Stauffer, 2009c; Guba & Lincoln, 1994); that human experience is central to the generation of new knowledge and knowledge is a human construct (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Creswell, 2013; Dewey, 1938; Wenger, 1998); that this study is value-laden (Creswell, 2013) and methodologically, the processes are inductive, emergent and shaped by my own experience as teacher and researcher (Braun & Clark, 2013; Creswell, 2013). Given these philosophical assumptions, the study sits within a social constructivist interpretive framework, as such a framework recognises the complexity of subjective experience and the validity of seeking to understand the world through such experience (Creswell, 2013; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

1.2 Aim, objectives and goal

Table 1 provides an overview of this study. The aim of this study is to better understand the complexities of collaborative learning by discovering participants' experiences of collaborative learning for music practice during 2014 at USQ. In order to achieve this aim, I will:

1. conduct a thematic analysis of students' experiences as recorded in their journals and essays and use Karlsen's (2011) musical agency lens to interpret these themes;
2. apply Wenger et al.'s (2011) conceptual framework to collect and interpret evidence of value creation through participation in collaborative learning; and

3. use the outcomes from 1 and 2 as a source for professional and paradigm reflection about the ways in which HME is delivered—the *means*—and the purpose of HME—the *ends*—in the USQ context.

Through discovering the complexities of participants' experiences, the goal of this study is to “provide inspiration” (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b, p. 4) to other practitioners about the role collaborative learning can play in the learning and teaching of music practice or performance within HME.

Table 1—Overview of study

Rationale	Aim	Research questions	Objective	Justification	Methods	Outcomes	Thesis	
<p>Prior to <i>Collaborative Learning in Higher Music Education</i> (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013a), collaborative learning remained on the fringes of HME and little researched (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b)</p> <p>Given rapid change in society more generally and the challenges faced by HME, it is timely to investigate CL in USQ context (Gaunt, 2013; Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b; Sloboda, 2011; Virkkula, 2015)</p>	<p>To better understand the complexities of collaborative learning by discovering participants' experiences of collaborative learning for music practice during 2014 at USQ</p>	1. How did participation in collaborative learning for music practice build students' individual and collective agency?	Conduct a thematic analysis of students' experiences as recorded in their journals and essays and use Karlsen's (2011) musical agency lens to interpret themes	<p>Enhances understanding of collaborative learning from in-depth examination of participants' experiences through the use of theoretical tools</p>	Thematic analysis of students' reflective essays and journals	1. Set of themes relating to the ways participation built student agency at individual and collective level	Chapter 5	
		2. In what ways did participation in collaborative learning for music practice create value for participants and other stakeholders?	Apply Wenger et al.'s (2011) conceptual framework to collect and interpret evidence of value creation through participation in collaborative learning		Thematic analysis of re-storied student questionnaire data and other quantitative data	2. Set of value indicators, represented as a matrix	Chapter 6	
		3. In light of the answers to questions 1 and 2, in what ways did participants' experiences of collaborative learning contribute towards an expanded view of the means and ends of HME at USQ?	Use outcomes 1-4 as a source for professional and paradigm reflection	Literature calling for a philosophical approach to music education	<p>Fundamental need for inquiry stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) in HME (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b)</p>	Narrative analysis of entire data set to construct value creation stories	3. Set of value creation stories for specific students, the teacher/researcher and the overall learning community	Chapter 7
						Combine value indicators and value creation stories	4. Value creation matrices for students and the teacher/researcher	Chapter 7
				Critical review of outcomes with reference to literature	5. Discussion of the means and ends for HME in the USQ context	Chapter 8		

1.3 Research questions

In response to this aim, I pose the following questions regarding the experiences of participants during 2014 at USQ:

1. How did participation in collaborative learning for music practice build students' individual and collective agency? (Chapter 5)
2. In what ways did participation in collaborative learning for music practice create value for participants and other stakeholders? (Chapters 6 and 7)
3. In light of the answers to questions 1 and 2, in what ways did participants' experiences of collaborative learning contribute towards an expanded view of the means and ends of HME at USQ? (Chapter 8)

1.4 Scope and limitations

The participant pool was comprised of first year students who completed the 2014 academic year and me, as teacher/researcher. Based on previous experience, it took the full academic year for relationships between students and teachers to establish effectively. By focussing on one cohort across one academic year, the objective is to present a rich, detailed and thick depiction of participants' experiences of collaborative learning for first year music practice students. However, it is acknowledged that by adopting such an approach, the voices of students who did not complete either semester are absent from this study. The implications of this are discussed further in Chapters 8 and 9.

Within the music practice courses at USQ, students participate in weekly workshops which involve all students, including instrumentalists and singers and weekly tutorials for instrument, voice, or song writing. Workshops are two hours each in length and tutorials each one hour. Approximately half the workshops are dedicated to ensembles presenting and receiving feedback on work in progress. All students and teacher/s are present. The remainder of the workshops is used to divide the class into ensembles for rehearsals. Because there are always at least three and sometimes five or six ensembles in each semester, teachers will spend a certain amount of time with each ensemble. Some of this rehearsal time is therefore unsupervised. In addition to rehearsals during class, students independently arrange extra rehearsal time. A teacher does not supervise this extra rehearsal time, however, students will sometimes request the assistance of a teacher. This study focuses on participants' experiences of the workshops and extra rehearsals, not the tutorials, as the tutorials are taught by a range of teachers, each with their own teaching style. Any data regarding the instrument-specific tutorials were excluded from analysis.

As previously emphasized, the results of this study can be viewed within both the specific and broader contexts. The research was conducted within a very specific time and place. This work is therefore characterised as a *study* rather than a *case study*, as I will not attempt to extrapolate from the findings to make observations about more general phenomena (Evans, Gruba, & Zobel, 2011), for example, that the collaborative model under examination here would be appropriate in all HME contexts. The results are not generalizable, but may be transferable to other similar contexts

(Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Rather than constituting a one size fits all pedagogical model, the collaborative learning environment and participants' experiences of it are intended to show how context was responded to. This response may take a different form, depending on the circumstances.⁵

This study focuses on participants' experiences (Karlsen, 2011; Westerlund, 2008). Unlike several other recent experiment-style studies into collaborative learning in music (e.g. Brandler & Peynircioglu, 2015; King, 2008),⁶ this study will not evaluate the effectiveness of collaborative learning by examining musical outcomes. The term *musical outcomes* refers to traditional markers of progress in music practice such as the ability to play in tune and in time, memorization, proficiency in technical exercises or scales, the ability to successfully perform particular repertoire or reach a certain standard on an instrument. Musical outcomes are relevant here only to the extent that they relate to students' experiences and their perceptions of what they learned.

1.5 Significance

This study seeks to contribute to the field of collaborative learning in HME as conceptualized by Gaunt and Westerlund (2013b) in a variety of

⁵ As Dewey (2011) noted in relation to his experimental elementary school at the University of Chicago, a working educational model is not something to be copied, necessarily, but is an example of what is feasible.

⁶ Brandler and Peynircioglu (2015) conducted an experiment to discover whether collaborative learning helped or hindered the individual's learning of ensemble repertoire. King (2008) examined the effectiveness of using either a learning technology interface or paper-based manual by paired student collaborators within the recording studio.

ways. This research captures one attempt to cultivate shared goals and problem solving within a learning context which has traditionally used the one-to-one model. Further, exploring participants' experiences of collaborative learning at USQ seeks to illuminate how complex social interactions contribute to learning. On an aspirational level, I hope to provide inspiration to other practitioners about the improvisatory and creative aspects of teaching within collaborative learning (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b) and to present collaborative learning as an expansive process for the musical and personal development of students and as a valuable source of paradigm reflection for HME practitioners.

Consequently, the findings are intended to be of interest to a wide range of stakeholders including higher music institutions—both USQ and other HME providers—and private music studios wishing to investigate the use of collaborative learning, music educators at all levels of education and music education researchers. The study may also be of broader interest to educators and researchers of collaborative and social models of learning and teaching. USQ is not alone in addressing the challenges for HME presented by a rapidly changing educational landscape.⁷ These challenges are discussed in Chapter 2. The findings of the study are potentially transferable to other educational contexts, particularly those with a similar profile to USQ, namely small or regional universities.

⁷Some other Australian examples include the Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University (Carey, 2004; Carey & Lebler, 2012), James Cook University in Townsville, Queensland (Daniel, 2005), the University of Wollongong (Latukefu, 2010), the Australian National University (Australian National University, 2012), and most recently the Elder Conservatorium in Adelaide (Loussikian, 2015).

Wenger et al.'s (2011) conceptual framework *Promoting and assessing value creation in communities and networks* has not yet been applied to its fullest extent in an HME context. The framework has been applied in other contexts as will be discussed in Chapter 2 and is referenced in music education research (see e.g. Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013a; Partti & Westerlund, 2013; Partti, Westerlund, & Lebler, 2015; Rikandi, 2012). In this study, however, I use the framework to its fullest extent, as both a conceptual framework for understanding the role of communities in facilitating learning and as a research tool to collect, collate, analyse data and present findings on the value created by participating in a community of practice based on collaborative learning. The application of the framework in this study provides a useful starting point and a worked example for other institutions, educators and researchers wishing to launch similar investigations.

Finally, fulfilling the aim of this study will produce knowledge from practice on practice, which may be of use or interest to other practitioners in similar contexts. As a practitioner researcher, I wish to make my work open to scrutiny and critical evaluation, so that implications for practice can be assessed and disseminated (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

1.6 Overview of thesis

Chapter 2 considers the broader context and positions the rationale and aim for the study within the literature. The research questions are presented conceptually at the intersection of three themes from the literature—mapping today's HME landscape, collaborative learning and the

theoretical basis for the study, namely Wenger's (1998) social theory of learning. I also discuss the specific theoretical tools used in this study. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology and discusses the two research approaches—practitioner and narrative inquiry. Chapter 4 presents the research design and proposes a credibility framework for this study. The findings are presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. These findings address the aim of the study to better understand the complexities of collaborative learning through discovering participants' experiences of the 2014 learning community. In Chapter 8 I discuss the findings and use them as a source for paradigm reflection on the means and ends of HME in the USQ context. Chapter 9 concludes the study by claiming its significance and noting implications for practice and directions for further research.

Chapter 2. Positioning the Study

The purpose of this chapter is to position the rationale and aim for the study outlined in Chapter 1 within the literature. I begin with an explanation of the metaphor “playing the changes” used in the study’s title. I then broadly map the rapidly changing landscape within which HME currently exists. By positioning the events at USQ within the wider field of change and challenge in HME, the USQ response can be viewed as both contextually specific but potentially transferable to other contexts. Against this backdrop, the theoretical framework for the study is presented. This section discusses the social theory of learning adopted, along with the two theoretical tools chosen to explore participants’ experiences of collaborative learning—Karlsen’s (2011) musical agency lens and the conceptual framework by Wenger et al. (2011). The final section examines collaborative learning more generally and recent research into collaborative learning in HME. The research questions are located conceptually at the centre of Figure 1, where the themes discussed in this chapter intersect.

1. How did participation in collaborative learning for music practice build students' individual and collective agency? (Chapter 5)
2. In what ways did participation in collaborative learning for music practice create value for participants and other stakeholders? (Chapters 6 and 7)
3. In light of the answers to questions 1 and 2, in what ways did participants' experiences of collaborative learning contribute towards an expanded view of the means and ends of HME at USQ? (Chapter 8)

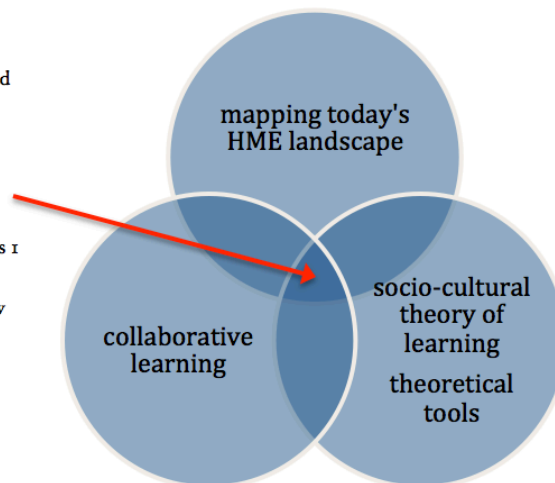


Figure 1—Themes in Chapter 2 and relationship to research questions

An explanation of the metaphor for this study's title "playing the changes" provides a convenient introduction to the key themes in this chapter. The phrase is borrowed from jazz, where musicians improvise or play over the "changes"—the harmonic structure of the music. Collaborative learning at USQ operates in a similar way to improvising or playing the changes. With the introduction of collaborative learning at USQ in 2012, a classroom laboratory for experimentation emerged (Allsup & Westerlund, 2012). Given the diverse range of students' backgrounds, abilities and interests, classes were not so much planned as responded to and staff were challenged each week to draw on their expertise as professional musicians to guide students through these uncharted waters. Teachers

needed to be able to improvise in both the pedagogical and musical senses⁸ and respond in any given moment to what was required by the students, rather than being wedded to a rigid lesson plan or lecture.

The improvised nature of these classes is dependent on the social relationships present within the class at any given time. Students work together in small groups on focused, open-ended tasks, problem solving, negotiating, and learning from their interactions with each other (Bruffee, 1999; Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b). As teachers, we create the conditions for collaboration to take place (Folksestad, 2006; Gerlach, 1994). No longer the “sage on the stage”, nor the “guide on the side”, teachers in such a learning environment become the “meddler in the middle” (McWilliam, 2009, p. 281). Staff must gauge when to intervene in students’ work and when to leave them to find their own solutions. At USQ, one of our main meddling tasks as teachers is to place students strategically into groups—based mostly on instrument and personality, to strike a balance—to optimise student learning. We then set certain tasks, for example, to prepare certain types of repertoire, or to rehearse for workshops and performances. If students are absent or un-enrol from the class, we work with the affected ensemble to improvise a solution.

⁸ Referring to the work of Sawyer on the links between improvisation, creativity and teaching, Gaunt (2013) suggests that “musicians can and should draw on their artistry as a cornerstone of their approach to teaching” (p. 51). In addition to creative teaching, there is also much in the literature relating to teaching *for* creativity. In teaching for creativity “command and control” pedagogy should be used sparingly—rather, leadership is shared, explanations are kept to a minimum and errors are welcomed (McWilliam & Dawson, 2008, p. 638).

Connecting these experiences to the literature, two key passages have inspired the use of the metaphor “playing the changes” for the title of this study. The first comes from Jorgensen (2003a), who describes a dialectical approach to teaching and learning as follows:

Dialogical or conversational teaching relies on improvised responses of showing and telling. There are many ways of conversing through such means as rehearsals, discussions, teacher presentations, or demonstrations. Whatever the specific approach, the teacher is reflecting in the midst of action, devising strategies on the spot, and attempting to take advantage of the present moment, no matter how unexpected the particular circumstances. This improvisational or rhapsodic quality of transforming teaching extends to how music is taught, and the explicit connection between music and teaching as improvisation represents a fresh and forward-looking approach pointing the way to models of teaching that reflect the subject matter more closely than traditional, prescriptive, corseted, and teacher-directed methods can do. In this way, teaching more closely approximates the nature of music making itself, and the medium more clearly reflects the message. (pp. 130–131)

As both an educator and a jazz musician, in my experience, collaborative learning for music practice *does* reflect the creative, improvised and inherently social nature of much music-making. It also reflects many professional contexts in which much music is made.

Whereas Jorgensen’s (2003a) passage accurately captures the general

character of the collaborative learning environment, Gaunt and Westerlund (2013b) identify the potential for the creative and improvisatory aspects of collaborative learning to “break/interrupt the routines of canonized professional interactions” (p. 4). Traditionally, the roles of teacher and student are “institutionally regulated” within the one-to-one model (Bjøntegaard, 2015, p. 24). Later chapters describe the ways in which collaborative learning at USQ has constructively disrupted (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) the traditional roles of student and teacher in this context.

On a higher level of abstraction, the metaphor represents collaborative learning as a way to playfully, creatively and constructively respond to the challenges facing HME. The following section broadly maps these challenges and argues that it is timely to engage in paradigm reflection within HME.

2.1 Mapping today’s HME landscape

As outlined in the Introduction, this study uses an understanding of the complexities of participants’ experiences of collaborative learning as a source for professional and paradigm reflection. Whilst professional reflection should be part of everyday practice for educators (Sloboda, 2011), Gaunt (2013) suggests that by definition, Sloboda’s *paradigm reflection* requires a more fundamental re-thinking which can result in major shifts or even a reconceptualization about content or approach.

Paradigm reflection is timely during periods of great social change

(Sloboda, 2011). Sloboda broadly outlines three current trends which warrant paradigm reflection within HME: changes within the employment market for musicians, the changing cultural and ethnic makeup of society and changes in the education and training sectors. In the last two decades, changes within higher education in Australia and rapid cultural shifts have prompted some higher music educators and researchers to reconsider the role and relevance of curriculum and pedagogical practices (e.g. Carey & Lebler, 2012; Daniel, 2005; Latukefu, 2010). However, in the main, HME has been slow to adapt to broader social and cultural changes (Carey & Lebler, 2012; Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b; Regelski, 2009). In order to contextualise both the circumstances giving rise to this study, as well as its findings, the following section provides a broad overview of the challenges for HME as identified in the literature.

2.1.1 Institutional and systemic challenges

The Australian higher educational landscape changed radically during the 1990s. In 1988, the Dawkins Review, conducted by the Federal minister for education John Dawkins, heralded sweeping changes in Australian higher education. These changes included new funding models and student fee contributions, the amalgamation of institutions and increased accountability measures for universities in relation to courses and research (Dawkins, 1988). These reforms were criticised for, amongst other things, creating an uneven playing field in which newly amalgamated universities—mostly new regional universities formed from amalgamating institutes of advanced education—had to compete with sandstone institutions in capital cities for funding (Global Access Partners, 2011).

More recently, the *Review into Australian Higher Education* (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008) introduced further reforms, including increased targets for the number of students studying at tertiary level.

University restructuring in Australia introduced by Dawkins resulted in the gradual “academization” of HME whereby conservatoires and institutes of advanced education were subsumed into universities in both regional and metropolitan areas. Carey et al. (2013) describe these reforms as “a shift in the cultural logic of higher education teaching and learning” (p. 149) which introduced greater demands across all disciplines for financial accountability and consequently, evidence-based justification for pedagogical models. One-to-one is the primary pedagogical model through which students learn music practice in HME (Carey et al., 2013; Carey, Bridgstock, Taylor, McWilliam, & Grant, 2013; Carey & Grant, 2015; Gaunt, 2008; Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013; Virkkula, 2015).⁹ The one-to-one model has a longstanding tradition (Abeles, Hoffner, & Klotman, 1984; Bjøntegaard, 2015; Johansson, 2013). Since the reforms in Australia and elsewhere¹⁰ there has been an increase in research into the one-to-one model (e.g. Bjøntegaard, 2015; Carey & Grant, 2015; Carey et al., 2013; Collens &

⁹ Harrison, O’Byrne, & Lebler (2013) refer to the four traditional pillars of music learning within the conservatoire as solo studies, ensemble studies, music literature studies, and musicianship. Despite ensemble studies being one of the four pillars of the conservatoire model, ensemble studies are an adjunct to, rather than the primary vehicle for, the development of individual skills. Ensemble studies are usually led by a teacher or ensemble director and the pedagogical style tends to mirror that of the one-to-one model, but transferred to a group context (Cangro, 2015; Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b).

¹⁰ These reforms are responsible, according to some commentators, for creating the “neo-liberal university” (Davies, Gottsche, & Bansel, 2006).

Creech, 2013; Johansson, 2013; Gaunt, 2008; Gaunt, 2010; Gaunt, 2011; Gaunt, Creech, Long, & Hallam, 2012; Presland, 2005). The increase in research into the one-to-one model demonstrates that there is momentum within the academy to make the practices of one-to-one explicit by illuminating its unique character as an effective pedagogical model for the development of an individual's practical skills. Despite increased research, there are concerns that the funding model now in place for Australian institutions fails to take into account the special requirements of high quality music education such as one-to-one tuition and that as a result some Australian music faculties are "at breaking point" (Global Access Partners, 2011, p. 5).¹¹ As Fautley and Murphy (2015) observe, it is during times of economic stress that debates about the nature and purpose of music education often come to the fore.

Whilst some institutions are confronting the challenges to HME funding through more research on existing pedagogical models, a different approach was taken at USQ. The decision was made at USQ to try a different model, despite the fact that funding for one-to-one tuition was never specifically under threat. The purpose of replacing the B Mus and other discipline-specific degrees with the BCA was to reduce the overall number of courses offered in the creative arts. The course rationalisation meant that that the vestiges of the B Mus retained in the BCA were a poor

¹¹ This report was compiled by a task force of academics, industry professionals and government, business and not-for-profit organisations to assess the impact of the Dawkins reforms on tertiary music education. The major conclusion of the report was that Australian HME is "seriously underfunded compared with international peers" (Global Access Partners, 2011, p. 5).

fit within the new context. In the case of USQ, it was course rationalization which led to changes in pedagogical models, in order to align courses with program objectives. This, combined with the range of other contextually specific factors discussed in the Prologue, highlights the challenging nature of delivering music education within the contemporary context of a regional Australian university.

In addition to these challenges at the institutional level, there is an increasing awareness in the literature that pedagogical approaches within HME should help prepare students for portfolio careers (Bartleet et al., 2012; Carey, 2004; Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts & Strong, 2005; Gaunt et al., 2012; Harrison et al., 2013; Sloboda, 2011). Music graduates are increasingly maintaining portfolio careers which combine a broad range of employment activities (Bartleet et al., 2012; Brown, 2009; McWilliam, Carey, Draper, & Lebler, 2006; Carey & Lebler, 2012; Feichas, 2010; Gaunt et al., 2012; Harrison et al., 2013; Mills, 2006). Some reviews of HME undergraduate programs have taken place in response to these changes (e.g. Carey & Lebler, 2012). At the very least, Gaunt (2013) argues that such factors warrant reflection on the purpose of HME and the ways in which HME might need to adapt to prepare students for their likely futures.

Carey and Lebler (2012) and Sloboda (2011) identify a changing cultural landscape as a further challenge for today's HME. The following section argues that the emergence of a participatory culture is one of the most relevant cultural developments for HME and that features of participatory culture can provide guidance for educators when designing

contextually responsive pedagogical methods.

2.1.2 Cultural challenges

The current technological revolution is rewiring the very ways we think and interact with each other and the world around us (Turkle, 2015). The rapid evolution of technology has created the situation in which “today’s students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach” (Prensky, 2001, p. 2). In addition to strong participation in informal learning which is discussed further below,¹² today’s students participate in creating art as well as consuming it and rarely question their right to do so, for example on the basis that their skills are not yet sufficiently developed. Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton, and Robison (2006) refer to this phenomenon as *participatory culture*¹³ and argue that today’s educational environments need to accommodate students’ involvement in participatory culture, defined as follows:

A participatory culture is a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one’s creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to

¹² In a recent report conducted in partnership with the Royal Philharmonic Society in the UK, Derbyshire (2015) reports that almost half the children currently playing an instrument in the UK do not have lessons and almost a fifth of children who play an instrument have never had any lessons.

¹³ Dewey (2011) describes a similar phenomenon in relation to the democratization of knowledge and learning during the Industrial Revolution, with easier access to printed materials, increased means of communication and travel (see also Jackson, 1998).

novices. A participatory culture is one in which members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least they care what other people think about what they have created). (p. 3)

Jenkins et al. (2006) write specifically about the ways in which educational systems need to prepare students to be literate in new media, however, the underlying tenets of a participatory culture are especially relevant considerations for the teaching and learning of music practice and performance in HME. As Lebler (2007) notes, being a member of a participatory culture has a democratizing effect on the notions of expert/novice which has implications for the traditional power dynamic between teacher and student, or master and apprentice. In such contexts, the emphasis for teachers shifts from the transmission of knowledge from expert to novice, to designing learning environments within which students are co-creators of learning (Lebler, 2007).

In contrast to participatory culture, bars to participation in HME have traditionally been high. Students are expected to have a certain level of formal training and in Australia, this is usually undertaken through the Australian Music Examinations Board exams (Daniel, 2005). Many of today's prospective music students do not travel this path prior to university, particularly if they are contemporary musicians. The very fact of institutionalising music learning is itself a potential bar to participation, in that the authority of knowledge lies with those within the institution—the

“master teachers”—and the “storehouse of knowledge” (Luce, 2001, p. 21) students bring with them is undervalued.¹⁴ These students learn music in myriad ways, including participating in social media, computer games and making content for YouTube. They possess expertise not traditionally recognised as valuable within formal learning environments. Success for such students is measured not by an exam mark but by how many “likes” they receive for their latest SoundCloud post. Engaging with and learning music in informal ways has become the common way of learning and increasingly, sitting formal examinations less common (Folkestad, 2006), at least in the context of applicants wishing to study at USQ. Opening the doors to HME for such applicants values their ability to demonstrate musicianship in different ways at any stage of development (Jorgensen, 2003a). Jorgensen writes that doing this

challenges the validity of bifocal music education, that is, one for the relatively few musically talented and another for the majority (those whose musical aptitude and achievement are assumed to be low and therefore restricted to listening or comparatively low levels of performance). Christopher Small (1980) argues that musicality may be far more widespread than is commonly believed in the West. If this is true, all students need to be taken seriously in terms of musical

¹⁴ There are exceptions. Regelski’s (2008) *action learning* concept of music education acknowledges that learners arrive with knowledge, values and tastes and are variously influenced by the institutions and structures around them. Action learning strives to build education upon this base, rather than ignore it. Elliott and Silverman (2014) place the learner’s identity at the center of their praxial philosophy on music education. Karlsen (2010) describes a Swedish educational environment the design of which is heavily based on students’ identities as popular musicians.

instruction, and many more are capable of demonstrating musicianship than may have been traditionally believed. (p. 205)

Rethinking bars to entry is not a lowering of standards, but an interrogation of commonplace thinking in HME (Jorgensen, 2003b) and, others would argue, an ethical act.¹⁵ On a practical level, given the changes to university funding and the removal of student quotas across the board in Australian higher music education, opening HME up to broader participation in certain contexts seems inevitable.

Recent music education research has explored the democratising potential of participatory culture (Partti, 2012; Partti, 2014; Partti & Karlsen, 2010; Westerlund & Partti, 2012). Participatory culture embraces the values of musical open-mindedness, cross-genre flexibility and mobility (Westerlund & Partti, 2012). Notions of authentic expression are subordinate to shared ownership and hybrid aesthetics; individual and shared goals co-exist; participatory culture enables people—anyone, not just those deemed fit—to explore who they are and how they might express themselves through music (Westerlund & Partti, 2012). Westerlund and Partti (2012) speculate that the characteristics of participatory culture may be instructive for HME.

¹⁵ Väkevä & Westerlund (2007) suggest an alternative viewpoint to that which sees music and music education as only for the gifted or for those who have reached certain standards in specific musical traditions. Such a viewpoint “emphasizes the dynamism of the experience of the students within a cultural context” and shifts the focus from values, norms and standards towards channelling learning processes “into directions where the relationship between the means and ends is subjected to ethical deliberation according to situational needs” (pp. 99-100).

The challenges faced by today's HME are not insurmountable. As Westerlund and Partti (2012) suggest, there may be guidance on the way forward within the very nature of the challenges themselves, particularly in participatory culture with its emphasis on learning as social participation. The following section outlines the theoretical framework adopted for this study, with the over-arching lens being Wenger's (1998) social theory of learning. Wenger's theory views learning as a fundamentally social activity. It places the emphasis on learning as becoming, or identity formation and transformation, rather than on the transmission of content or skills from master to apprentice. By adopting such a view, participants' experiences of collaborative learning at USQ during 2014 can be contextualized, characterized, better understood and valued in different ways.

2.2 Theoretical framework

In an increasing trend, recent studies into pedagogical approaches in HME have adopted socio-cultural views of learning (e.g. Barrett, 2005; Iilomaki, 2011, 2013; Kenny, 2014; Latukefu, 2010; Latukefu & Verenikina, 2013; Rikandi, 2012, 2013; Virkkula, 2015). Gaunt and Westerlund (2013b) connect the recent increase in interest in collaborative learning in HME to the paradigmatic shift in education theory which views learning as social:

The shift towards the potential of the collaborative aspects of learning in helping to tackle some of these contemporary challenges goes hand in hand with the increasingly accepted understanding of learning as social endeavour, and of teachers being facilitators and co-learners rather than doorkeepers of learning. The process of widening and

democratizing knowledge production therefore involves significant reorganization of our thoughts concerning expertise and agency in higher music education. (p. 1)

Gaunt and Westerlund trace the origins of these developments in educational theory to the educational psychology and philosophy of John Dewey. They view the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) as breaking new ground in developing our understanding of the social nature of learning and the development of expertise more generally.

In addition to outlining Wenger's social theory of learning,¹⁶ the following section discusses two additional theoretical tools used in this study—Karlsen's (2011) musical agency lens and Wenger et al.'s (2011) conceptual framework for promoting and assessing value in networks and communities. The links between these two tools and Wenger's social theory of learning are discussed, in order to explain and justify their use.

2.2.1 Social theory of learning

Wenger (1998) argues that institutions base their views of learning on the assumption that learning occurs as the result of teaching, which is an individual process, separate and distinct from the rest of our lives. In such

¹⁶ Throughout this study, I refer to Wenger's *social theory of learning* as the theoretical framework, rather than the broader term, *socio-cultural theories of learning*. Wenger's theory is undoubtedly influenced by socio-cultural theorists such as Vygotsky, particularly regarding Vygotsky's theory relating to engagement in social activity as the basis upon which to build high-level cognitive functions and his concept of the zone of proximal development (see Barrett, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Specifically, however, Wenger's distillation of a vast range of theories into a social theory of learning provides the theoretical framework for this study.

learning environments, teachers transmit knowledge to learners, learners are expected to demonstrate their knowledge out of context and collaboration is tantamount to cheating (Wenger, 1998). Wenger's social theory of learning is based on an entirely different assumption "that learning is, in its essence, a fundamentally social phenomenon" (p. 3). Wenger does not claim that his social theory of learning is a blanket theory of learning—it takes for granted and is compatible with other neurological and psychological theories of learning. A social theory of learning offers a different *perspective* on learning, whilst acknowledging that learning is a result of a broad and complex range of social, biological, neurological, cultural, linguistic and historical factors (Wenger, 1998).

Communities of practice. The primary focus of Wenger's theory is learning as social participation (Wenger, 1998). This concept of participation is more than simply being involved in certain activities—it encompasses "*practices* of social communities and constructing *identities* in relation to these communities" (Wenger, 1998, p. 4). At the heart of Wenger's theory is the concept of *communities of practice*, which provides a framework for thinking about knowing and learning as a process of social participation (Wenger, 1998; Wenger, 2011). Lave and Wenger (1991) first articulated the concept of a community of practice when they discovered a complex set of social relationships surrounding apprenticeship training (see also Wenger, 2011). Wenger then expanded the concept in his 1998 book *Communities of Practice*. As an analytical concept, communities of practice provides an entry-point into a broader conceptual framework on the nature of learning, of which it is a constitutive element (Wenger, 1998). This

broader framework characterizes learning as social participation, constituted by community (learning as belonging), practice (learning as doing), meaning (learning as experiences) and identity (learning as becoming) (Wenger, 1998).

In addition to being an analytical tool, there are actual communities of practice everywhere (Wenger, 1998). Not all communities are communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). For a community to be a community of practice it must possess three characteristics—domain, community and practice (Wenger, 1998, 2011). First, it must have an identity defined by a shared *domain* of interest. Members “value their collective competence and learn from each other” (Wenger, 2011, p. 2). Second, in pursuing their interest within this domain, learners act as a *community* through interactions, joint activities, discussions, helping each other and sharing information (Wenger, 1998, 2011). Finally, community members are engaged in *practice*, developing a shared repertoire of resources, tools, experiences and information (Wenger, 1998, 2011). Recognising that a community of practice has formed within a particular learning environment provides an entry-point into understanding learning from the perspective of social participation.

Wenger (1998) differentiates between communities of practice and learning communities. For Wenger, a community of practice which keeps alive the tensions between experience and competence can become a learning community. For a learning community, learning is “not only as a matter of course in the history of its practice, but at the very core of its enterprise” (Wenger, 1998, pp. 214–215). *Learning community* is used by

Wenger in relation to more formal learning environments—it is usually used in the context of students learning—in contrast with communities of practice which are “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger, 2011, p. 1). In the current study, I adopt a similar approach to Rikandi (2012), in that I conceptualize the music practice courses as an overall community of practice. The learning community,¹⁷ based on collaborative learning, is comprised of teachers and their students taking part in those courses in any given year.

Learning outcomes. If HME were to adopt fully a social theory of learning in practice, learning outcomes would be assessed in terms of trajectories of meaningful participation and learning identity, as well as the broader learning capability learners develop in the communities they serve (Wenger, 2004). Regarding the assessment of meaningful participation and collaboration itself, Hunter (2006) argues that the group as an entity should be a central concern when assessing collaborative learning. Typically within higher education, given the focus on individual achievement towards a Degree, assessment strategies are not designed to encompass collaborative work. Whilst assessment of collaborative learning is not strictly within the ambit of this study, it is worthwhile noting that at USQ, the 2014 cohort participated in peer and self-assessment of their collaborators—see

¹⁷ It is acknowledged that the term *learning community* has a specific meaning in relation to the US college system (e.g. Cross, 1998; Tinto, 2003; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). However, it is not in this sense that the term is used in this study.

Appendix A. The criteria for assessment were based largely on the processes of collaboration. This assessment process goes some way towards addressing the issues raised by Hunter regarding the importance of assessing the group as an entity, which is identified by Wenger (2004) as meaningful participation.

However, a further challenge for assessing collaborative learning is how to assess personal learning trajectories which might involve learning outcomes such as shifts in identity or personal transformation. Learning outcomes for Australian Bachelor degree programs must comply with the *Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)* (Australian Qualifications Framework Council, 2013). These learning outcomes are expressed as knowledge, skills and the application of knowledge. At the Bachelor level, the AQF requires graduates to apply knowledge and skills “with initiative and judgement in planning, problem solving and decision making . . . to adapt knowledge and skills in diverse contexts . . . with responsibility and accountability for own learning and professional practice and in collaboration with others . . .” (Australian Qualifications Framework Council, 2013, p. 48). Chapter 8 discusses a strategy for ensuring that assessment practices for collaborative learning provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate personalised learning outcomes. It also discusses how personalised learning outcomes relate to the AQF learning outcomes regarding knowledge, skills and the application of knowledge.

Focussing on social participation rather than the individual has implications for our understanding of learning, what is valued within such learning and what is required to support it (Wenger, 1998). For individuals,

learning is more than engagement—it involves contributing to community practices (Wenger, 1998). In the current study, for example, such an understanding allows for the identification and valuing of students' contributions to their own and others' learning. For communities themselves, learning is a process of refining practices to ensure new generations of members (Wenger, 1998). Implicit in such a view is the need for educational environments to evolve and adapt to change. Finally, for organizations, viewing learning as social participation acknowledges that the value of the organization and its corporate knowledge is created through a complex web of different communities of practice (Wenger, 1998).

2.2.2 Framework for assessing value

In adopting the perspective of learning as social participation as advanced by Wenger (1998), the challenge becomes finding ways to assess the pedagogical value of experiences and to establish whether something has actually contributed to learning (Cajander, Daniels, & McDermott, 2012). To address this challenge, Wenger et al. (2011) provide a value assessment and conceptual framework, *Promoting and assessing value creation in communities and networks*. The framework has been applied in a number of other contexts unrelated to music education research.¹⁸ As noted

¹⁸For example, open-ended, ICT group project work involving intercultural competence and contributing student pedagogy (Cajander et al., 2012); online communities of practice and networks for business (Yap & Robben, 2012); communities of practice in health policy (Bertone et al., 2013); knowledge management within the third sector organisation Scottish Autism (Guldberg, Mackness, Makriyannis, & Tait, 2013); the role of networks in academics' professional development and changes in teaching practices (Patariaia, 2014); and online teachers' networks (Booth & Kellogg, 2014).

in the Introduction, the framework is referenced in recent music education research (see e.g. Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013a; Partti et al., 2015; Partti & Westerlund, 2013; Rikandi, 2012) but is used as a theoretical reference, rather than a tool for conducting research. In this study, the framework is used as a practical tool, which applies Wenger's social theory of learning to gain a different perspective and better understanding of the complexities of learning music practice collaboratively.

The term *community* in the framework is essentially an abbreviation of *community of practice* (discussed previously).¹⁹ The value²⁰ being assessed by the framework is the “value of the learning enabled by community involvement” (Wenger et al., 2011, p. 7). This concept of value is broad enough to encompass what learners *perceive* to be valuable (Cajander et al., 2012). Viewed within a social theory of learning, the nature of this learning will be quite different to the usual description of skills development or content acquisition, although learners will also experience these aspects of learning. Applying the framework enables a more nuanced version of learning to be discovered, beyond quantitative metrics towards the more qualitative, experiential aspects of learning (Cajander et al., 2012; Wenger et al., 2011).

In order to appreciate the richness and complexity of the value created

¹⁹ Whilst the framework is also applicable to social networks, because this is not relevant to the current study, it will not be discussed further.

²⁰ It is acknowledged that the concept of value is much debated in philosophical literature; however, a discussion of this is beyond the scope of this study. For current purposes, value is understood and employed purely in the terms outlined in the framework.

by social participation, Wenger et al. (2011) identify five cycles of value creation—immediate value, potential value, applied value, realized value, and reframing value.²¹ Each of these cycles is described in more detail in Chapter 6. There are complex relationships between cycles and there is no hierarchy of levels or causal chain, however, when viewed holistically, the cycles provide a rich and detailed account of value creation. Following value creation across cycles enables researchers to “paint a more reliable picture of how a community or network is creating value” (Wenger et al., 2011, p. 33).

In order to paint this picture, the framework offers practical tools for collecting data. The framework identifies two complementary types of data—value indicators and value creation stories. For each cycle, the framework describes typical indicators of value and suggests corresponding data sources—some of which are quantitative—and questions to ask community participants. It is noted that indicators of value such as levels of participation, self-reports and surveys can act as proxies for educational value—that is, they infer value—but that a more reliable view of value creation requires a holistic view (see also Cajander et al., 2012). To gain this view, the framework suggests a special genre of story—the value creation story—as a means of complementing, supporting and strengthening indicators of value. The narrative trajectories of value creation stories follow the five cycles of value creation, but may not always cover all cycles. These

²¹ Exploring value creation across cycles accords with Dewey’s concept of experience as a continuum (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). See also Laes (2015).

stories can be told by individual community members about specific incidents or activities, or about their overall community involvement. Value creation stories can also be collective, referring to the story of the community in which people participate. The assessment and promotion of the value of social learning is located in the dynamic interplay between collective and individual stories and these stories and value indicators (Wenger et al., 2011). The overall picture of value creation combines these data as a *value creation matrix* (Wenger et al., 2011). The results of applying the framework in this study are presented in Chapters 6 and 7.

2.2.3 Musical agency

In addition to applying the framework to assess and promote the value created by participation in collaborative learning, I use musical agency as a lens through which to view students' experiences of learning.²² Wenger (1998) situates his social theory of learning within broader social theory. Sitting somewhere between theories of social structure and theories of situated experience, in Wenger's theory, learning as participation occurs "though our engagement in actions and interactions, but it embeds this engagement in culture and history. Through these local actions and interactions, learning reproduces and transforms the social structure in which it takes place" (p. 13). The social theory of learning is also positioned between theories of practice and identity—learning "is the vehicle for the

²² Cycles of value creation and viewing value creation as a temporal process also accords with views of agency within sociology as a "temporally embedded process of social engagement" (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 963).

evolution of practices and the inclusion of newcomers while also (and through the same process) the vehicle for the development and transformation of identities” (p. 13). In further refining the position of his theory within broader intellectual traditions, however, Wenger says he is far more concerned with theories of identity and practice than “structure in the abstract” (p. 14).

As Rikandi (2012) notes, in theories such as Wenger’s, agency and identity are closely related concepts. For Wenger, education “concerns the opening of identities—exploring new ways of being that lie beyond our current state” (p. 263). Beyond training, which is concerned with an inbound trajectory towards specific competencies, education places students on an outbound trajectory towards many possible identities (Wenger, 1998). In other words, education must not be merely formative, but transformative (Wenger, 1998). Wenger argues that education should be first and foremost concerned with identities and modes of belonging and only secondarily with skills acquisition and content transmission.

Using Karlsen’s (2011) musical agency lens is one way to explore identity and modes of belonging within students’ educational experience.²³

²³ Karlsen’s (2011) lens has been applied in numerous recent studies to explore experience. Laes (2015) examined the experiences of a group of older women who formed a rock band in Finland. Rikandi (2012) used the lens as a theoretical tool in her study of group piano courses as part of music teacher training, also in Finland. Whilst prior to the formulation of Karlsen’s lens, Karlsen and Westerlund (2010) used agency as a way to explore the experiences of immigrant students in music education in Finland. They concluded that instead of concentrating on the content of music education, music educators should examine what impact music education has on students’ experiences and how it affords action and supports individual growth. In this way, agency-enhancing music education can support the development of democratic educational practices.

Karlsen draws together various strands of thought from the fields of music education—philosophy, psychology and sociology—in order to create the lens as both a theoretical and practical tool for research into music education from the angle of experience (see Figure 2). Karlsen’s lens moves beyond the more traditional views of musical agency in music education philosophy as “first and foremost connected to instrumental music making” or the “physical engagement with the instrument or voice” as “the most central and ultimate musical experience”, towards a more wide-ranging view of musical agency which encompasses music’s potential to bring about “transformational agency” and “identity transformation” (Karlsen, 2011, p. 109).

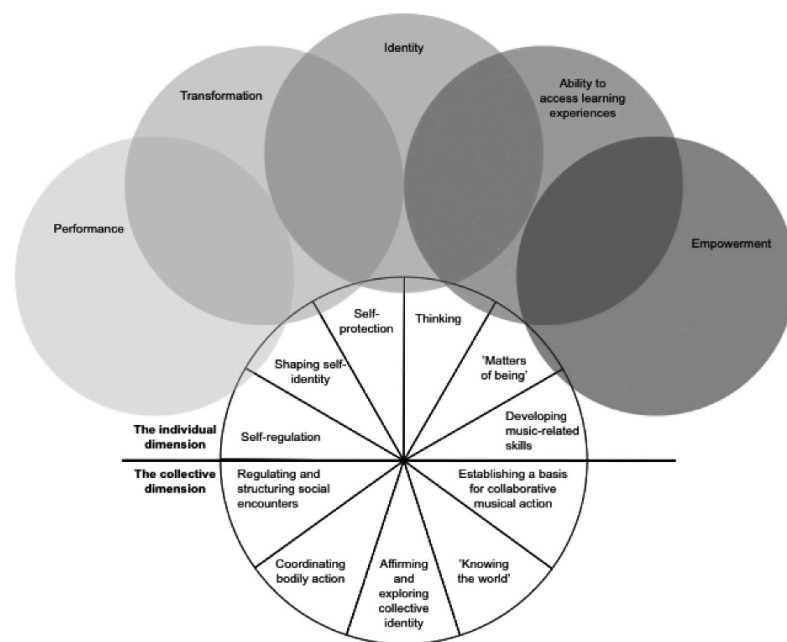


Figure 2—A sociologically inspired understanding of musical agency as a lens (Karlsen, 2011, p. 118)

In summarising the views of musical agency within the various sub-fields of music education, Karlsen (2011) concludes that they all share a common theme, namely “individuals’ *capacity for action* in relation to

music or in a music-related setting” (p. 110). Students’ experiences of collaborative learning are examined in Chapter 5. Viewed through Karlsen’s lens, a nuanced and detailed picture emerges of how students learn within an environment in which the capacity to act—to learn, to relate to music, or each other, or the broader world around them—is actively supported by and negotiated within, collaborative learning. This negotiation occurs through constant interactions between the more formal, macro levels of learning—institution/teacher designed frameworks—and informal, micro levels learning—small peer-based ensembles. The interaction between macro and micro levels of learning borrows from the broad sociological concept of agency whereby capacity for individual action is determined or at least influenced by larger societal structures, norms, conventions etc. Furthermore, Karlsen notes that acknowledging the macro-micro nexus helps researchers develop reflexivity. Placing learners’ experiences under the lens with an awareness of the nexus “will enable the researcher to see how these, situated on the micro side of society, might be connected to larger structural properties and occurrences on the macro side” (p. 117).

Karlsen’s (2011) lens covers both an individual and collective dimension of agency. At the individual level, Karlsen formulates six ways in which participation in music is viewed as being used for “structuration and negotiating one’s position in the world” (p. 111). These include using music participation for self-regulation; shaping self-identity; self-protection; thinking; matters of being; and developing music-related skills. Karlsen notes that all facets of individual musical agency are accomplishable through the category of developing music-related skills, including shaping

self-identity and as a layer upon that notion, transformation. As noted earlier, Rikandi (2012) points out the close relationship between agency and sociocultural theories of learning, particularly Wenger's theory that learning is "identity transformation" or discovering new ways of being within the world. In her study, Rikandi focussed on her students' capacity to act, viewed as both musical and pedagogical agency, given the music teacher education context of the study, rather than their experience of identity or who they were/became as a result of their participation in her courses. Karlsen anticipates that when music-related action is seen through the lens of agency it "enables the possibility for a wider view of such conduct than is usually found within the field of music education" (p. 117).

Within the collective dimension of musical agency, Karlsen (2011) synthesises five categories from the literature: "using music for regulating and structuring social encounters; coordinating bodily action; affirming and exploring collective identity; 'knowing the world'; and establishing a basis for collaborative musical action" (p. 115). As with the individual dimension, Karlsen describes "establishing a basis for collaborative musical action" as encompassing all aspects of musical agency on the collective dimension:

While performing and creating, we regulate and structure the social encounter that the event in itself constitutes, which often includes political negotiation. We coordinate our bodies in order to produce a meaningful musical output. Playing, singing and creating in any ensemble or group will most likely involve affirming and exploring some kind of collective identity, whilst being an occasion through which ideas are lived, and through which ways of knowing the world

are explored. (p. 117)

Chapter 5 discusses the dimension collective agency in relation to students' experiences of collaborative learning.

In summary, the lens is a sophisticated tool through which to view students' experiences of their learning in all their complexity. As Karlsen (2011) notes:

This proposed lens likewise holds the potential to capture the musical as well as non-musical outcomes of interactions with music and, perhaps even more importantly, it may help to bridge the worlds of formal and informal learning situations, in the sense that it allows the researcher to focus on a very wide range of a person's encounters with music, no matter in which contexts they take place. (p. 117)

Due to its ability to capture the formal and informal aspects of students' learning and potentially capture non-musical outcomes, the lens is ideally suited to analysing students' experiences in this study. The findings in relation to individual and collective agency may then have implications for exploring other possible routes for music education by taking experiences into account when designing future learning environments (Karlsen, 2011).

2.3 Collaborative learning

Having established the theoretical viewpoint adopted in this study, the following section looks at the broader nature of collaborative learning—what it is, what it looks like in practice, its value and its challenges. This section concludes with a review of recent research into collaborative

learning in HME.

There are many definitions of collaborative learning (Luce, 2001), but a common feature is that it involves working with others. Collaborative learning is, however, more than simply learning in a group setting. Traditionally, group teaching places the emphasis on what the teacher or lecturer does, rather than acknowledging the role that students play in constructing learning (Bruffee, 1999; Ingleton, Doube, & Rogers, 2000). Gaunt and Westerlund (2013b) claim that much group teaching and learning in HME is an extension of the one-to-one model. The literature on group teaching and learning of music is not entirely relevant to the current discussion, because much of this research occurs within the traditional teacher-directed paradigm.²⁴ Brief mention of studies will, however, be made, where they support or differentiate aspects of this study.

Collaborative learning challenges the authority of knowledge and the idea that the teacher is the seat of that knowledge (Bruffee, 1999). Collaborative learning began because of a concern that “the hierarchical authority structure of traditional classrooms can impede learning” (Bruffee, 1999, p. 89). As previously noted, the role of teacher and student has generally been “institutionally regulated” within conservatoire settings (Bjøntegaard, 2015), with the teacher viewed as a “master”, “maestro” or

²⁴ In her review of this literature, Bjøntegaard (2015) notes that group teaching is used mostly for teaching basic skills to beginners and that there is limited research on its use in HME. She identifies Daniel’s (2004) research as a somewhat isolated example of group teaching and learning at the HME level (see also Daniel, 2005).

“expert” in their area of practice who transmits knowledge to the student.²⁵

Rather than transmitting knowledge from expert to novice, collaborative learning first and foremost requires knowledge to be constructed within a community of learners. According to Bruffee (1999) this is a reacculturative process whereby students gradually transition into new knowledge communities.²⁶ This transition first occurs through vesting authority and trust in their own group. With more confidence and gains in interdependence, students vest authority and trust in their class community and finally, students vest knowledge and trust within themselves (Bruffee, 1999).

The teacher must facilitate this transition. The most obvious way this is done is through the teacher strategically placing students into small groups. This requires the teacher to take into account a number of factors to ensure the best chances for successful learning within the group. Bruffee (1999) explains that this process requires the teacher to consider a number of variables such as “degree of heterogeneity, group size, ethnic background, phases of work, and so on” (p. 29). Placing students in groups

²⁵ It is for this reason that introducing collaborative learning practices into music practice and performance courses can be challenging. Christophersen (2013) argues that music educators are experts in their field and that keeping this expertise hidden for the sake of creating a democratic learning environment may be unhelpful. She further contends that teachers’ expertise, which brings with it a position of authority and power, should not be denied and that the distribution of power particularly in relation to formal evaluation processes should be given careful consideration. These views are discussed further in Chapters 8 and 9.

²⁶ In a similar vein, Regelski (2008) describes music teachers as “cultural mediators” who, rather than imposing music of the dominant group on students, must build bridges for students between various types of music and associated cultural groups and social practices (p. 10).

to make music together involves some understanding of the personalities involved—to strike some balance between leaders, followers, introverts, extroverts etc.—students’ skills sets, levels of abilities and even some consideration of deliberately cultivating diversity. The literature generally advises that heterogeneity is best to maximise learning opportunities (Bruffee, 1999). The teacher’s primary role is therefore social organization and setting appropriate tasks (Bruffee, 1999) and “creating the conditions in which collaborative learning can occur” (Gerlach, 1994, p. 10).

The challenge collaborative learning poses to the traditional authority of the teacher comes with an attendant valuing of the contributions to peer learning made by students. In this sense, collaborative learning encompasses aspects of contributing student pedagogy—also based on social-constructivist educational theories—which allows students to contribute to the learning of their peers and to value the contribution of others (see e.g. Cajander et al., 2012). In examining an alternative pedagogical model which combines group, individual and master classes for horn students, Bjøntegaard (2015) found that to make such a model succeed, “it is essential for the students to feel that their contribution to the group is of importance” (p. 33). This valuing of students’ contributions to peer learning is characteristic of collaborative learning and is in contrast to command and control (McWilliam, 2009) pedagogical models (e.g. Persson, 1994, 1996a, 1996b).

Once groups are organized, students work together on focused but open-ended tasks (Bruffee, 1999). In the case of the first year music practice students at USQ, these tasks require students to learn, arrange, write lead-

sheets for, rehearse and present discrete musical items ranging anywhere from one to three or four pieces at a time. Sometimes extra details are given, for example, to prepare an acoustic cover version of a 1980s hit song or to choose a song by Bob Dylan to prepare for the next week's class. As the semester progresses, tasks become more oriented towards the end of semester concert performance. Whilst these tasks are focused, they are open-ended in the sense that working on musical skills never has a definitive end but is a continuing process. Given the heterogeneity of the groups, consideration must be given to the difficulty level of the tasks—they must be within Vygotsky's (1978) *zone of proximal development* for each student within the group. That is, students must be working at the very frontier of their current capabilities (Bruffee, 1999).

Once in small groups working on focussed, open-ended tasks, students begin to talk with each other and it is through these interactions that learning occurs (Bruffee, 1999; Gerlach, 1994; Wenger, 1998). Students learn primarily through the processes of investigation, discovery and application, not by taking on knowledge or information transmitted by the teacher (Gerlach, 1994). Accordingly, collaborative learning can be seen as “the hand that fits ever so snugly into the glove of social constructivism” (Flannery, 1994, p. 20). Social constructivism contends that knowledge is constructed through social interactions between people, not by people interacting with things such as a repertoire, or canonical text (Bruffee, 1999;

Flannery, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1998;).²⁷

In summary, collaborative learning redefines the traditional roles of teacher and student—teachers’ knowledge and authority are no longer supreme, students contribute towards the learning of their peers and these contributions are valued. Rather than issue directives or transmit information, teachers create the conditions for collaboration to occur. These conditions include placing students into heterogeneous groups and setting focussed, open-ended tasks for the groups to work on. Learning within collaborative learning occurs primarily through social participation.

2.3.1 The value of collaborative learning

Collaborative learning has much to recommend itself for use within HME (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b; Luce, 2001; Virkkula, 2015). Collaborative learning fosters creativity (Lebler & McWilliam, 2008; McWilliam, 2008; McWilliam, 2009; McWilliam & Dawson, 2008; Sawyer, 2006a, 2006b, 2008a, 2008b), joint problem solving and a variety of other skills pertinent to professional life as a twenty-first century musician (Hunter, 2006; Lebler, 2013; Luce, 2001). Collaborative learning

²⁷ In reviewing the literature from the late 20th century on collaborative learning, King (2008) (citing Dillenbourg et al.’s 1996 review of the research) identifies the various branches of constructivism and their links to collaborative learning: “socio-constructivist, socio-cultural, and shared cognition” (King, 2008, p. 425). These approaches identify the importance of individual development through social interaction (socio-constructivist, based on the work of Piaget), individual *and* group development through social activity (socio-cultural, influenced by Vygotsky) and the importance of situation or physical environment to learning through social interaction (shared cognition or situated learning, based on the work of Lave and Wenger). Common to all of these theoretical perspectives is the recognition of the learning potential and value of social interactions between student peers and students and teachers.

also has more general positive effects, such as increased retention, student satisfaction, self-initiated and self-directed learning, lifelong learning, critical reflection and evaluation (Hunter, 2006; Lebler, 2013).

Christophersen (2013) summarises the broader educational literature which documents the positive effects for students, including “improved intellectual achievement, deeper understanding of subject matter, increased empathy, respect for others and co-operation skills” and even renewed enjoyment in teaching for staff (p. 77). In his review of the literature, Luce (2001) cites numerous studies from the 1990s which demonstrate that collaborative learning enhances achievement in both personal and interpersonal domains.

Whilst recent research about collaborative learning in HME is discussed further below, it is worth noting here that a number of studies contribute towards our understanding of the benefits of collaborative learning specifically in the HME context. Rikandi (2012, 2013) and Latukefu (2010) reported the transformation of student engagement as a result of the deliberate co-construction of collaborative learning environments. Ilomaki (2013) found that using a collaborative approach to teaching and learning aural skills for pianists in HME is a way to respond to burgeoning stylistic diversity and fluid professional environments that require musicians to be versatile and adaptable. Latukefu and Verenikina (2013) discovered that orchestrated collaboration amongst singing students led students on a journey towards self-directed learning. Feichas (2010) concluded that incorporating informal, collaborative learning practices into an aural class helped better address the needs of a diverse student cohort. Ford and Sloboda (2013) argued that inter-disciplinary collaborations can

help musicians develop due to their exposure to the differences between disciplines (e.g. between theatre and music). Lebler (2013) examined the role peer and self-assessment plays in supporting a broad range of learning outcomes. This study contributes to the literature on the value and benefits of collaborative learning (see Chapter 8).

2.3.2 The challenges in collaborative learning

In reviewing the literature on collaborative learning, Micari and Pazos (2014) note that, whilst there is great support for the benefits of collaborative learning, there is research which demonstrates that some students will not benefit, under certain circumstances. Of particular note in the literature is the issue of student preparation—under-prepared students tend to retreat from the learning activities. Demographics and gender can influence the level to which students participate (Micari & Pazos, 2014). Micari and Pazos identify “social comparison concern” (p. 249) as an issue impacting on the effectiveness of small group learning for certain students who may, for example, see themselves as less talented, less knowledgeable, or less prepared than their peers. They specifically look at the effectiveness of an intervention strategy—peer leaders from higher level courses—on the impact of social comparison concern in small group learning and find it to be an effective way to assist students engaging in comparing themselves with their peers.

Christophersen (2013) outlines the ethical challenge inherent in collaborative learning. She argues that for collaborative learning to work, a certain degree of acculturation needs to take place. This process of

acculturation creates the potential for the exercise of power and social control by “contributing to the formation of ‘good’ collaborators who are obedient to the cultural formation” (p. 78). The power issues inherent in collaborative learning raise certain ethical questions:

[W]hat does one mean by collaboration? Is it suitable in all music education settings? Is it fair to require collaboration? How is collaboration intended to take place most effectively? Is there a way to distinguish between genuine collaboration and quasi-collaboration? What measures can reasonably be taken to ensure implementation, and what are the consequences for staff and students?

(Christophersen, 2013, p. 83)

Christophersen cautions against an idyllic version of collaborative learning, which presents “a rather glossy picture of motivated, happy students, freeing their human potential through music, and actively seeking consensus by participating in open social and musical dialogue within an inclusive and accepting community of equals” (p. 80). For Christophersen, one of the challenges of collaborative learning is ensuring that the resulting ethical questions are addressed at every phase of its use—before, during and after. This requires a high degree of commitment from teachers to initiate and guide discussions with students about the role of power and social control within collaborative learning environments.

Wenger (1998) cautions that learning communities and communities of practice are not necessarily inherently positive environments or as Rikandi (2012) puts it, “ethical by default” (p. 43). Indeed, Wenger

acknowledges that communities can become hostage to their own history and in that sense, as inflexible and rigid as command and control (McWilliam & Dawson, 2008) learning environments. When this occurs, the boundaries of a community become “stiff and impermeable” and “past successes a blinder to new opportunities” (Wenger et al., 2011, p. 10). To counter against this potential for communities to become insular and inflexible, communities require “sustained identification and engagement”:

Negotiating and renegotiating a reason to learn together, helping each other, following up on ideas, developing shared resources, sustaining a social space for learning—all this requires time and commitment.

Not everyone has to have the same level of commitment, but there has to be enough for the community to feel alive as an entity. (Wenger et al., 2011, pp. 10–11)

The challenges identified by Wenger must be borne in mind by educators, despite the fact that ensuring the dynamism of a collaborative learning community is indeed time consuming and requires a certain ethical and philosophical commitment.

2.3.3 Informal learning and collaborative learning

In addition to the work of Green (2001) in the UK, Scandinavian music educators and researchers have been particularly active in exploring informal music learning (Karlsen, 2010). Much of the early work in this area focussed exclusively on informal settings —“garage bands”—rather than the potential for informal learning practices to work dialectically with formal practices (Folkestad, 2006). This potential has been increasingly

realised in practice and in music education research in more recent years, especially in Scandinavia, but there are some commentators who feel that formal education still has much to learn from informal learning practices (e.g. Westerlund & Partti, 2012).

Formal learning practices in music commonly involve activities which are “sequenced beforehand” or “arranged and put into order by a ‘teacher’”; informal learning processes are steered by the interaction between learners (Folkestad, 2006, p. 141). The formal/informal distinction can refer to the learning environment, learning style, ownership of learning and intentionality of the learner. In order to understand these elements more fully, it is useful to view informal/formal along a continuum. Like almost all learning practices, collaborative learning sits somewhere along this continuum, being neither wholly formal nor wholly informal (Folkestad, 2006).

Collaborative learning of music practice at USQ is best viewed as dynamically shifting along this continuum, depending on the circumstances. Much of the work done in collaborative learning at USQ such as unsupervised rehearsals is independent of the teacher, mirroring aspects of informal learning practices (Folkestad, 2006). On the other hand, some work is teacher-driven or directed, which is associated with formal learning. However, when the teacher shifts from direction to meddling, this enhances the conditions for informal learning to occur. Thus, the role of teacher in this setting is traversing the continuum of formal/informal, but never settling at either end of the spectrum—hence, too, the classification of this type of teacher as *improvised responder* (Jorgensen, 2003a).

There have been criticisms levelled against informal practices within formal contexts, particularly in relation to the work of Lucy Green.²⁸ Allsup (2008) argues that teachers play an important role in the fostering of critical values and perspectives, even where popular music forms the curriculum and informal practices are used. Allsup and Westerlund (2012) express concern that Green's informal methodology is overly student-centred and that the teacher's role as ethical deliberator about the ways in which to facilitate student authority and ownership is sidelined. Allsup and Westerlund contend that "while we are getting better at facilitating student agency, we fear that we are not getting better at facilitating *teacher* agency" (p. 133). Allsup and Westerlund advocate for the role of teacher as ethical deliberator within educational contexts, rather than merely a "witness to student freedom" (p. 134).²⁹ The positioning of teacher as meddler in the middle within a collaborative learning environment has the potential to address some of these concerns. The role collaborative learning played in building teacher agency is discussed in Chapter 8.

2.3.4 Recent research

Recent research shows that aspects of collaborative learning are increasingly evident in HME in a range of contexts, including one-to-one tuition (Collens & Creech, 2013), peer teaching (Daniel, 2004; Latukefu,

²⁸ One common critique is the absence of the teacher in Green's work (e.g. Allsup, 2008). Green herself has responded to these criticisms—see Green (2009).

²⁹ Allsup and Westerlund (2012) provide various examples of what this deliberation might look like within the classroom, including the teacher opening students up to critical debate about the performance of Death Metal, or nationalistic music.

2010; Lebler, 2007; Rikandi, 2012, 2013), inter-disciplinary collaborations (Ford & Sloboda, 2013), mentoring (Smilde & Halldórsson, 2013), post-graduate researcher education (Westerlund & Karlsen, 2013), aural class for piano students (Ilomaki, 2013), aural class for music majors (Feichas, 2010), and in the recording studio in music technology and popular music programs (King, 2008; Lebler, 2006, 2007). Some studies have focused on the use of informal practices within HME (e.g. Feichas, 2010; Karlsen, 2010; Virkkula, 2015). However, with the exception of Virkkula (2015) and Karlsen (2010), all these studies are confined to instrument-specific groups or aural classes, or examine collaborative learning as part of a suite of approaches (e.g. Bjøntegaard, 2015; Luff & Lebler, 2013). Others have taken an experimental approach to measure the impacts of collaboration on ensemble preparation (Brandler & Peynircioglu, 2015; Ginsborg & King, 2012).³⁰ As will be seen from the following discussion, the present study both aligns with and confirms some of these existing studies, but is also distinguishable from others on a number of grounds.

Some recent studies have considered the effects of combining informal and formal practices in HME. In response to a student cohort presenting at university with both formal, informal and mixed learning backgrounds, Feichas (2010) reports on an experiment to bring informal practices into a university aural class through the use of improvisation,

³⁰ Neither of these studies was conducted strictly within the HME context, as both studies involved mixed participant pools, comprised of students and professionals (Ginsborg & King, 2012) and students and community members (Brandler & Peynircioglu, 2015).

composition and ensemble work. She notes that doing so challenges the position of teacher as authoritative and gives the learner more autonomy. Feichas reports that students, despite coming from diverse backgrounds, recognised each other's strengths and valued learning from each other. She concludes that a pedagogy of integration of the informal and formal is a "pedagogy of diversity and inclusion" (p. 57). Rikandi's (2012, 2013) work to reconceptualise group piano classes for music teacher education reports similar findings, in that students and the teacher's roles were re-visioned as constructing learning together. Karlsen (2010) reports on the use of informal practices within a HME programme in Sweden. Karlsen argues that thinking in terms of the informal/formal dichotomy may not be the most useful starting place for designing learning environments. She contends that a more fruitful consideration would be how to fulfil students' need for authenticity and to design learning environments which correspond and contribute to students' identity development. Virkkula's (2015) study advocates that educators pay more attention to informal learning practices of jazz and pop musicians and consider the ways in which these practices can be integrated into formal settings without losing their original role and purpose. Through a reflection on participants' experiences of collaborative learning at USQ, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on the blending of informal and formal learning practices within HME.

Most of the recent research into the role of collaborative learning in HME has focussed on instrument-specific group classes, rather than heterogeneous music ensembles. Some examples include Bjøntegaard (2015)—horn students; Luff & Lebler, (2013)—horn students; Latukefu

(2010) and Latukefu & Verenikina (2013)—vocalists; Rikandi (2012, 2013)—pianists within a teacher training program; Daniel (2004, 2005)—pianists; Cangro (2004)—instrument-specific or mixed woodwind/brass groups; and Brändström (1995)—pianists.³¹ In contrast, Virkkula's (2015) recent study of the role of community of practice in HME focused on heterogeneous jazz and popular music ensembles in a Finnish conservatory. Professional musicians³² mentored student ensembles. Virkkula suggests that socio-cultural learning practices can play an important role within music education. The starting point for Virkkula's study is the contention that music education in popular and jazz idioms requires the consideration of a broader palette of pedagogical practices than is currently used. Also central to his study is the fact that, at least in Finnish conservatories, students do not have the opportunity to work with professional musicians as a matter of course. Virkkula found that students experienced a sense of a shared goal in the form of a performance and this motivated them to practise and do their best. Participation in the workshops facilitated students'

³¹ One possible reason for the lack of research into the use of heterogeneous ensembles in HME could be that these ensembles lend themselves more readily to popular music styles and these styles are still relatively rare within the academy. As recently as 2005, at least in the US, a survey of undergraduate music programs across the country revealed that the repertoires of classical and to a less extent, jazz, completely dominated the HME landscape (Kennedy, 2005). This is still the case within the Australian sector, although there are a few exceptions (e.g. the Bachelor of Popular Music program at the Queensland Conservatorium and undergraduate programs offered by private tertiary providers such as JMC Academy and the Australian Institute of Music (AIM)). In Finland, there has been a move in recent years to "democratise" music curriculum across all levels of education, to not only broaden access to specialist music education but to address the increasing interest in popular (or "rhythmic") styles of music (Väkevä & Westerlund, 2007). Väkevä and Westerlund (2007) also report that, at least in music teacher education, students are taught popular styles. Generally speaking, however, HME is still dominated by Western classical music and to a lesser extent, jazz.

³² Whilst not defined by Virkkula (2015), the term *professional musicians* in this context appears to refer to career musicians who play music for a living.

conception of themselves as musicians.

Despite some common ground, this study seeks to respond further to and extend the work done by Virkkula (2015) in a number of ways. Virkkula concludes his study with suggestions for further research, including an examination of the role of tradition in conservatoire practices. He then suggests that researchers examine the following: “What kind of outcomes would the communal development of conservatory activities lead to as an expansive process from the viewpoint of competence development in both teachers and students?” (p. 12). As noted in the Introduction, this study responds this question, albeit, using the focus of experience rather than competence development. Nonetheless, these findings provide a source for reflection on the ways in which formal music education—in this case, HME at USQ—has been influenced and fixed by tradition. This study can be further distinguished from the work of Virkkula in that he conducted his research as an outsider—he was not one of the participants in the workshops under examination. My position as teacher/researcher provides a unique insight into the role of teaching and the challenges to tradition within collaborative learning (Roberts, 1994).

Recent studies such as Luff and Lebler (2013) and Bjøntegaard (2015) have examined learning environments in HME which blend pedagogical models, for example, collaborative, one-to-one and master class settings. Luff and Lebler reflect that the blend of collaborative and individual learning is appropriate, effective and enjoyable for the teaching of orchestral horn students. Bjøntegaard’s (2015) study, which examined the effectiveness of a combined approach comprised of group and individual

lessons and master classes for horn students, found the approach to be “the best way of educating students as responsible, reflective and professional musicians” (p. 23). The specific context of the present study as described in the Prologue is quite different to that of training orchestral horn students. Whilst, for example, in the case of the institution in Luff and Lebler’s study there might be between 12 and 14 horn students, in the context of first year music practices courses at USQ, there is more likely to be that number of students across all studios, of which few if any are considering orchestral careers. By way of further differentiation from these studies, this study seeks to examine collaborative learning in and of itself, rather than as part of a suite of pedagogical approaches.

As noted previously, this study contributes to the increasing body of knowledge on the value of collaborative learning in HME, specifically the ways in which it might contribute to non-musical outcomes. Other studies have reported on this. Latukefu and Verenikina (2013) summarise their previous research and report that a socio-cultural learning environment for singing can help students become better self-directed learners. Lebler (2006, 2007, 2012, 2013) has conducted various investigations into innovative practices and peer learning within a Bachelor of Popular Music program. That program uses the recording studio as de facto teacher, with students working in groups on recording projects. A key feature of that program is that students develop as reflective practitioners, because they are engaged in ongoing peer and self-assessment. Students also develop as self-directed, reflective learners. Bjøntegaard (2015) refers to an older study by Brändström which considered group lessons for piano students—individual

lessons were provided, but had to be scheduled at the instigation of the student. Bjøntegaard writes about Brändström's study that:

The most noticeable effects of this project were connected with the development and growth of the participants. Words such as 'self-confidence', 'independence' and 'responsibility' were used in several of the evaluation comments. Brändström suggests that the most important role of the teacher is to create an educational environment and to awaken and stimulate the inner motivation of the students to take more responsibility. This is also what happens in the horn group lessons . . . (p. 32)

All these studies suggest that collaborative learning can have positive, non-musical effects on students. By adopting a social theory of learning through which to view participants' experiences, this study also seeks to contribute to our understanding of the value—both musical and non-musical—of collaborative learning.

Positioning this study within this field, given the specific context of this study, it presents a unique perspective on the use of collaborative learning in HME. It focuses on students' and the teacher's experience of working collaboratively in heterogeneous ensembles within a learning environment usually characterised by one-to-one teaching. Because of the nature of the role of the teacher within collaborative learning, it examines and challenges the "routines of canonised professional interactions" (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013, p. 4) within this context, responding to Virkkula (2015). Rather than taking an experimental approach like Brandler &

Peynircioglu (2015) or King (2008), this study is descriptive, focussing on participants' experiences. Unlike Bjøntegaard (2015) and Luff and Lebler (2013), this study examines collaborative learning in its own right, rather than as part of a blend of approaches. Finally, this study aligns with research efforts to uncover the non-musical benefits of a collaborative learning environment for music practice (e.g. Bjøntegaard, 2015; Latukefu, 2010; Latukefu and Verinikina, 2013; Lebler, 2006, 2007, 2012, 2013; Rikandi, 2012, 2013).

2.4 Chapter summary

This chapter positioned the use of collaborative learning at USQ in relation to the practical realities of delivering HME in today's rapidly changing institutional, systemic and cultural environments. I then discussed the theoretical framework, advocating that Wenger's social theory of learning was appropriate for understanding how learning occurs within a collaborative learning environment. I discussed the use of the two specific theoretical tools in this study—Karlsen's (2011) musical agency lens and Wenger et al.'s (2011) conceptual framework for assessing value in communities. In order to explain what collaborative learning is and how it works, I focused on the work of Bruffee (1999) and provided evidence from the literature of the value and challenges of collaborative learning. The relationship between collaborative and informal learning was also discussed. Finally, I positioned this study within the field of research into collaborative learning in HME, arguing that it makes an original contribution given its context—using heterogeneous ensembles in a HME context where one-to-one was previously used—its critical examination of

the role of the teacher in HME which challenges tradition, its focus on collaborative learning in its own right rather than as a blend of approaches and the exploration of the extra-musical benefits of collaborative learning. The following chapter presents the rationale for the research approaches adopted in this study.

Chapter 3. Methodology

This chapter discusses the research approaches adopted in this study—practitioner and narrative inquiry.³³ I begin by contextualizing the focus on experience in this study within the broader field of qualitative research in music education. I also connect that focus to the umbrella research approach adopted here, practitioner inquiry. Having established the specific philosophical view of music education and music education research adopted in this study, I describe the underlying philosophical assumptions I hold as researcher and identify social constructivism as an appropriate interpretive framework within which to view the research. I identify the limitations of the research approaches and discuss the characteristics of practitioner and narrative inquiry. The chapter concludes with the story of my own background as relevant to this study. This story is presented to acknowledge and make subjectivity and bias transparent.

3.1 Qualitative research in music education

The field of music education research is relatively young and within that field, qualitative approaches even more so. The mid 20th century has been identified as a marking point for the emergence of research as an important academic endeavour in music education (Jorgensen & Madura Ward Steinman, 2015). Yarborough (1984) reported it was only in the ten years prior that the field was being populated by researchers with a long-

³³ The following chapter discusses in detail the research design and methods used.

term commitment to the endeavour. Whilst the early years of music education research were mostly dedicated to philosophical and historical inquiries, a paradigm shift occurred during the period 1953 to 1978, with more research on “psychologically oriented experimental research” with a scientific focus (Jorgensen & Madura Ward Steinman, 2015, p. 275). Other analyses conclude that music education research during this period was mostly quantitative, although some qualitative studies do exist (Flinders & Richardson, 2002; Roulston, 2006; Yarbrough, 1984).

It was not until the 1990s that researchers began to turn more frequently to qualitative approaches in order to understand issues arising in music education (Roulston, 2006), although even at this stage, Roberts (1994) argued that qualitative paradigms were still largely being “ignored” by music education research (p. 26). With the publication of the *New Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning* in 2002, qualitative approaches had become more commonplace and the final chapter of the handbook provides a history of the use of qualitative approaches in music education research (Flinders & Richardson, 2002). By 2006, interest in qualitative methods had grown considerably in music education research circles (Roulston, 2006) and just a short time later in 2009 a volume specifically dedicated to narrative inquiry in music education research was published. Edited by Barrett and Stauffer (2009), this volume presents an exploration of the origins of narrative inquiry and examples of narrative inquiry from music education research.

Barrett and Stauffer (2009b) acknowledge that narrative inquiry in music education research is somewhat in its infancy, but nonetheless

evolving. They identify a turn towards narrative inquiry amongst music education researchers as coinciding with a more pluralistic view of music, music education and research generally:

This collective interest in and turn towards narrative is consistent with the music education profession's move away from singular grand tales of music, music making, and music teaching and learning and towards consideration of multiple stories, multiple voices, and multiple meanings of music and musicking. The collective turn towards narrative in music education is also consistent with the profession's move towards embracing multiple means and multiple lenses for examining the new and recurring complexities of music in life and learning. (p. 19)

Despite the growing body of qualitative studies and the recent turn towards narrative inquiry in music education, Westerlund (2008) argues that music educators have been much too concerned with musical outcomes, at the expense of educational processes.³⁴ This in turn has meant that much music education research also focuses on musical outcomes (Karlsen, 2011), neglecting the subjective element in music education, namely the experiences of students and the teachers. Westerlund revisions the nature and value of the means and ends of music education—“[p]edagogical

³⁴ It is acknowledged that the volume edited by Barrett and Stauffer (2009) contains numerous excellent examples of research into music education which places the agents in music education—the students, teachers and others—at the center of inquiry. This volume was published after Westerlund's (2008) call to action. Nonetheless, authors since have repeated the call for more music education focusing on experience (e.g. Karlsen, 2011).

actions of the teacher, social interaction between the students, the questions of how, as well as desires and shared interests become constituting elements of valuation in the means-ends continuum of learning music” (p. 79).

Westerlund argues that “[i]n order to be able to estimate whether music education fulfills (sic) its function, we needed (sic) more research on how learners experience their formal music education” (p. 91). This study seeks to respond to the need for more research of this nature, as identified by Westerlund. It also seeks to contribute further to the body of narrative inquiry in music education research presented by Barrett and Stauffer (2009). The following section elaborates on Westerlund’s position with reference to key texts in the music education philosophical literature.

3.1.1 A philosophical approach to means and ends

There are authors who suggest that it is always important to have a philosophical basis for action in music education (e.g. Allsup & Westerlund, 2012; Jorgensen, 2003b; Regelski, 2002; Regelski, 2008; Regelski & Gates, 2009). Such writers argue that it is essential for music educators to cultivate a critical awareness of their pedagogical methods, so that educational contexts can be responded to appropriately, according to situated needs (Regelski, 2008) and guided by moral considerations (Allsup & Westerlund, 2012). In this sense, moral considerations are not conceptualized as *a priori* goods, or *the* good, but *a* good or goods, situationally “embedded in conduct” (Allsup & Westerlund, 2012, p. 136; see also Elliott & Silverman, 2014). Authors such as Westerlund (2008) and Regelski (2008) argue that through a philosophical approach we can begin to move towards a more holistic music education, which is contextually derived, pluralistic,

responsive, relevant and valuable to both current and future needs of students. For teachers, such a vision of music education positions them as moral agents who adapt to the changing educational landscape and flourish (Allsup & Westerlund, 2012). The learning environment itself is seen as a site for experimentation where the imagination of teachers is constantly relied on to respond to “what is, and what might be” (Allsup & Westerlund, 2012, p. 144), rather than simply transferring existing fixed means or methods across constantly changing educational landscapes (Allsup & Westerlund, 2012).³⁵

Recent philosophical literature³⁶ focuses on the tendency in music education towards rigidity, inflexibility and an over-reliance on fixed means or methods (e.g. Allsup & Westerlund, 2012; Väkevä & Westerlund, 2007). Given that it is widely acknowledged in recent music education literature that music education now exists in a challenging world of rapid and constant flux (e.g. Allsup & Westerlund, 2012; Partti, 2014; Partti & Karlsen, 2010; Sloboda, 2011), it is more relevant now than ever before to engage in paradigm reflection (Sloboda, 2011) and reconsider the nature of the means and ends of HME. The link between HME and the conservatoire has meant

³⁵ Regelski (2002) refers to this tendency to rely on “tried and true” methods in music education as “methodolatry” which deems good teaching to be simply a matter of using a good method (p. 111).

³⁶ I acknowledge the broader debates in the philosophical literature on the nature of and justification for music education, for example, Westerlund’s (2002) critique of Reimer and Elliot’s philosophies and a recent response to this and other critiques of Elliot’s praxial philosophy by Silverman, Davis, and Elliott (2014). However, a thorough discussion of these debates is beyond the scope of this study. For current purposes, I have restricted discussion to recent literature that deals specifically with philosophical approaches to the means and ends of music education.

that means and ends are fixed by tradition (Väkevä & Westerlund, 2007), oftentimes regardless of context. The continued use of the one-to-one model in the first few years of the BCA at USQ is an example of the tendency in music education to adhere to these fixed means and ends. This study argues that music educational means and methods must be contextually derived.

In order to assess context through a philosophical approach, Jorgensen (2003b) articulates three tasks that philosophers and teachers in music education can engage in—“clarifying ideas, interrogating commonplaces, and suggesting applications to practice” (p. 197). The three branches of Jorgensen’s philosophical approach towards music education have been instrumental in both the thinking about—both before, during and after—and implementation of collaborative learning at USQ. In the USQ context, there has been a significant clarification of ideas, particularly around the purpose or ends of HME—who should it serve and for what purpose? Should the purpose of all HME be based on a fixed tradition, or should it respond to context? At USQ, commonplaces have been interrogated, particularly in relation to the power dynamic between teacher and student—should the teacher in HME hold all the authority, knowledge and power? What role can students play in their own learning? How do we value and respond to the knowledge and experiences students bring to formal learning from informal settings? Chapters 5, 6 and 7 explore participants’ experiences to gain a better understanding of collaborative learning and Chapter 8 answers these questions in light of that understanding.

3.1.2 Problematizing the ends question in HME

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) write that problematizing the ends question in education generally is at the very heart of practitioner inquiry—such inquiry asks what purposes other than academic might be important in education? As previously noted, music education and thinking about music education, has traditionally focused on fixed means and ends (Allsup & Westerlund, 2012; Väkevä & Westerlund, 2007; Westerlund, 2008). This is in large part because, at least in Western countries, music education and HME in particular, has concerned itself almost exclusively with the canon of Western art music. The values which inform the tradition of the teaching of Western art music in HME are that the ends of music education are fixed by tradition and that these ends should be reflected in a formal curriculum, delivered by teachers, who are at the centre of music education (Väkevä & Westerlund, 2007). The fixed ends of such an education justify the means as being fixed (Allsup & Westerlund, 2012). In other words, because the ultimate goal of music education is, in such a view, always a purely musical one which is assumed to hold intrinsic value—like the mastery of repertoire or an instrument—the ways in which this is achieved—the pedagogical methods—are immutable and remain unquestioned (Allsup & Westerlund, 2012). The role of the learner and the processes of learning within this value system are subordinate to the continuing endorsement of established ends through the upholding of tradition (Regelski, 2008; Väkevä & Westerlund, 2007; Westerlund, 2008). Regelski (2008) remarks upon the tendency within the sociology of education to overlook the personal lives of individual students. This means that the ways in which music education

might contribute at the personal level are ignored (Regelski, 2008; see also Karlsen, 2010, 2011).

Within schools, the focus on the strictly musical aspects of music education as opposed to the non-musical is a relatively recent shift in thinking, occurring around the mid 20th century (Mark, 2002). Around this time, music educators adopted the position that the value of music education existed in the music itself. This movement is commonly called the *aesthetic movement* (Mark, 2002). Prior to that, as Mark (2002) discusses in some detail, music education was almost *always* justified on non-musical grounds. Paradoxically, at the same time the aesthetic movement took hold, research into non-musical outcomes actually began to flourish outside of music education research circles in light of advances in cognitive psychology. Many studies focused on the ways music education supports learning in other areas, such as reading and mathematics. These studies have renewed interest in the non-musical value of music education, at least at the pre-tertiary level (Mark, 2002). In addition to creating ancillary benefits in more traditional areas of the curriculum, school music (at least in North America) is now broadly conceived to “nurture proficiencies that facilitate the smooth functioning of society” (Carruthers, 2008, p. 130).

Given its conservatoire origins, the aesthetic philosophy has always been and still is the predominant paradigm within HME. Carruthers (2008) writes that HME performance programs in particular are concerned primarily with building human capital in the form of elite performers with marketable skills and a competitive edge:

This single-mindedness is evident across university music programmes. Curricular silos tend to mirror professional silos, and universities graduate ever-increasing numbers of performers, composers, teachers, sound engineers, music historians, music theorists and other specialists each year. What role these graduates will play in *society*, as distinct from the *labour force*, is rarely considered beyond the most obvious (e.g., performers perform, composers compose and teachers teach). (p. 130)

Carruthers highlights the differences between school and university music education—whilst much school music emphasises process, within universities “product routinely trumps process” (p. 130). The end result is a higher educational environment which does take direct responsibility for the non-musical outcomes of music education. Carruthers concludes that universities can be informed by the lessons learned in school music, and that if universities shifted “some emphasis from product to process, from marketable skills to life skills—the relevance of professional musicians to the wider community would develop apace” (p. 132).

Carruthers (2008) argues in relation to the education of professional musicians that much can be learned from school music. For example, Elliott and Silverman (2014) advocate for music education to play a role in the positive personal transformation of music students. Based on a praxial philosophy of music education, they contend that music education and educators must work in such a way as to accommodate a variety of values or goods that include, but go beyond, making and listening to classical instrumental music for its supposed intrinsic value. Elliott and Silverman

argue that when music education is ethically guided

we achieve what Aristotle and many other philosophers consider the highest human value—*eudaimonia*—which is a multidimensional term that means full human flourishing: a “good life” of significant, enjoyable, and meaningful work and leisure; personal and community health and well-being; virtue; and fellowship, self-worth, and happiness for the benefit of oneself and others. (p. 59)

It is important to note that a praxial philosophy of music education considers *eudaimonia* *and* musical artistry to be the ultimate goals of music education. In other words, whilst expansive, one of these goals is still purely musical in nature. Such a view does not consider the possibility that some music students might experience their education as being principally of personal or non-musical rather than aesthetic value.

3.1.3 The focus of music education research

In order to place the experiences of students at the centre of music education and music education research, Westerlund (2008) advocates for a change of perspective when considering questions of justification and value in music education discourse. She argues that music and music education are usually justified and valued in terms of their subject, namely that music *per se* has inherent value, but that turning our focus to the agent in music education—learners of music—enables us to justify education and assess value in a different way. Westerlund suggests that the questions of justification and value in music education should be approached through Dewey’s theory of *valuation*, that is, in “terms of learning experiences

which contain personal desire and interest” (p. 80). Valuing music and justifying music education on aesthetic/musical grounds alone “undermines the experiential value of means” (p. 81) because the means are seen as merely the causal conditions for creating the end. Because the end is assumed to be of intrinsic value, the quality, nature or experience of the means is of no consequence. Such a view negates music educators’ and researchers’ ability to justify and assess the value located in and created by students’ participation in music education (Karlsen, 2011; Westerlund, 2008).

Westerlund (2008) notes that Dewey eschewed a fixed worldview and was more interested in the complexity of experience. In questions of value, “the constitutive role of action, and productive action in particular” were of crucial importance to Dewey (p. 82). By refocussing on productive action, the acts of learners “are not just ways and means to approach the world of professional musicians and their artistic achievements. Rather, they can themselves be sources of valuation which also reconstruct the learner’s view of him or herself” (p. 83). Such a reconstruction occurs not merely as a purely subjective experience, or simply in response to external factors such as the environment or a repertoire, but is “relational and gained in and through interaction” (p. 83). This re-positioning of the means of education as a potential carrier of value, particularly where those means promote human interaction and shape identity, accords with Wenger’s (1998) social theory of learning, discussed previously.

Bringing the experiential value of means for music learners into focus also allows for renewed consideration of the role of teacher within music

education. Allsup and Westerlund (2012) elaborate on the work of Westerlund (2008) and advocate for music education as ethical inquiry in which the music teacher operates as moral agent with the capacity to shape the means and ends of music education. Their particular brand of *situational ethics* calls upon music educators to take into account the specific context of their actions:

The music educator in this context is "trained" not only as a musical performer and musical expert, but is guided to exercise the wider educational and ethical considerations of his craft as well as given tools for experimenting, all in the service of his future students' musical and personal growth. (p. 144)

Whilst noting that method in education is characteristically used to a certain extent as an attempt to combat uncertainty, Allsup and Westerlund (2012) argue for a reconceptualization of method by viewing teachers as agents with “the capacity to reconstruct the means and ends of teaching into a constant *re-organization* of values for the good or the growth of oneself and others” (p. 126). In contrast to normative, fixed methods found in music education (e.g. Kodály, Dalcroze), Allsup and Westerlund advocate for the classroom to become an “experimental site, housed within complex ecologies, in which methods are tested” and for the teacher as an agent who not only adapts to change but flourishes “in the moving landscapes of learning” (p. 127).

The broader concept of valuation in Dewey’s philosophy as analysed by Westerlund (2008), in which means or the activities of learning can

potentially justify music education and be of value in and of themselves, opens the possibilities for contextually derived pedagogy to move beyond being valuable on purely aesthetic or utilitarian grounds. This has not traditionally been the domain of music education and music education research, concerned generally, as it has been, with musical means and ends, rather than those of the extra-musical variety (Westerlund, 2008). Therefore, unlike other recent studies on collaborative music learning (e.g. Brandler & Peynircioglu, 2015; Cangro, 2004; King, 2008) this study will not examine musical outcomes per se, in that the focus is not on whether members are necessarily more musically competent as a result of their participation. Within the context of a social theory of learning and an extended view of means/ends on a continuum of experience, it is not the transmission of skills and how well they are acquired which ultimately has value, but rather that the value in learning is derived from the ways in which learning new skills transforms identity (Wenger, 1998).

This expanded view of value finds a conceptual home and means for practical assessment within the two theoretical tools used in this study—Karlsen's (2011) musical agency lens and Wenger et al.'s (2011) framework for assessing value in communities. This framework is purpose-built to uncover the value or learning created by community participation across a continuum of experience, through cycles of value creation. This concept of value and the use of the framework opens the door to uncover the full range of value, both musical and extra-musical, which community participation generates. Karlsen says that focussing on the processes rather than the products of music education and by being aware of the potential for non-

musical learning outcomes to emerge may help teachers and researchers create learning environments which bring into focus “the positive *experiential and learning outcome* for each student” (pp. 107–108). In turn, this may help us understand what types of learning environments lead to a life-long interest in music learning (Karlsen, 2011). Both Westerlund (2008) and Karlsen call for research on music education that places the experience of students at the very centre of inquiry. This study responds by discovering students’ experiences of collaborative learning, how they perceive they learn in this environment and whether this environment might contribute to personal and musical identity, growth and transformation. As previously discussed, Karlsen offers musical agency as a lens to assist researchers in performing the type of research called for by Westerlund.

3.2 Philosophical assumptions and interpretive framework

The preceding section argued the philosophical basis for the focus on experience in this study. Shifting the researcher’s gaze from the product to the processes of music education allows for a reconceptualization of the role and value of the means of education for those who experience them. I connected this focus on experience to the use of the theoretical tools in this study. The following section outlines the broader philosophical assumptions informing this research and the interpretive framework within which these assumptions are embedded (Creswell, 2013; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Given the focus on subjective experience, this study assumes that reality is multiple and seen or experienced through many different perspectives (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009a; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In later

chapters, evidence of multiple realities is presented in the form of participants' own words (Creswell, 2013). This study assumes that these human experiences are central to the generation of new knowledge and that knowledge is ultimately a human construction (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Creswell, 2013; Dewey, 1938; Wenger, 1998, 2011). As a practitioner researcher, I aim to be as close as possible to the subject being studied (Creswell, 2013)—I am the teacher, researcher and the researched. My relationships with the participating students are a research advantage, rather than an impediment (Roberts, 1994). I seek to create new knowledge based on subjective experience of a specific context, which, despite its local nature, may still be of broader interest or instruction (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; O'Leary, 2004). I value personal knowledge and subjectivity and this study is based on my personal perspective and interpretation. I spent extensive time in the field with student participants and collaborated with them on later aspects of the research. The study is value-laden—I admit to biases (Creswell, 2013) and I acknowledge the key role my personal values and biases have played in the study design and interpretation and presentation of the results. To this end, I have included in this chapter a brief relevant personal history outlining the ways in which my values and biases as an individual, teacher, musician and student have shaped the course of this study. The processes used in this study are inductive and the findings are bounded contextually and temporally. Research questions and the approach to the study have developed throughout the course of the inquiry as I gained a deeper understanding of the problem being addressed (Creswell, 2013).

I identify social constructivism as the appropriate interpretive framework through which to view the results of the study, as it recognises the complexity of subjective experience (Creswell, 2013; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The aim of this study is not to identify an objective truth, but to provide a window into the experiences of participants of a collaborative learning community at a particular place and time. This study pays particular attention to the processes of interactions between individuals (Creswell, 2013). The final construction of experiences presented here is based on the social interactions between research participants within the collaborative learning environment and also those interactions which occurred during the data analysis phase between researcher and participants. Polkinghorne (1995) notes specifically in relation to narrative analysis that because narrative as a research result is ultimately a construction of the researcher, it is not appropriate to judge such results against criteria of truth or reality. The narratives presented in this study are not presented as objective truth, but as specific, socially constructed representations of experience. The findings are idiographic and potentially transferable, but they are not presented as a representation of a broader phenomenon—they are not generalizable (O’Leary, 2004). A more detailed credibility framework for assessing the results of this study is presented in Chapter 4.

3.3 Overview of research approaches and limitations

This study adopts a narrative approach which sits within a broader framework of practitioner research. Both of these approaches are discussed in more detail below. Before discussing the approaches and their use, however, I would like to acknowledge their limitations.

One of the most frequent criticisms of narrative research is that it “unduly stresses the individual over the social context” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). This criticism stems from the use of narrative approaches in the social sciences such as psychology where the focus in many studies was historically on case studies of an individual’s psychology (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). However, later applications of narrative inquiry have shown that its sphere of concern can extend to groups and community formation (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). This study actually combines these two focus points by discovering how a number of individuals experience the social negotiation of learning within a collaborative setting. Chapter 5 looks specifically at how individual and collective agency are built through this process of negotiation. The stories of the community as a whole and select individual stories are told in Chapter 7. By presenting participants’ experiences variously as specific and individual, as well as collective and overall, I have attempted to overcome some of narrative inquiry’s perceived extreme focus on the individual. Of course, in other contexts, this focus on the individual is seen as a great strength of narrative inquiry (Creswell, 2013).

In the context of research into educators’ experiences, Connelly and

Clandinin (1990) emphasise the collaborative nature of narrative inquiry. They argue that the research relationship between researcher and practitioners—or in this study, students—should be mutually constructed so that both parties “feel cared for and have a voice with which to tell their stories” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). I contend that the subject of students’ experiences in the current study differs from other educational studies where researchers may have, as their primary subject, teachers or teaching practices. The relationship between adults who are professionals—either working as educational researchers or educators—is more equal than that of teacher/researcher and first year university students. The power imbalance between teacher/researcher and students is acknowledged and discussed further below in relation to the ethical considerations for this study. I felt that true collaboration was only possible after students had finished the courses. In this sense, given the importance ascribed to collaboration by Connelly and Clandinin (1990), the lack of research collaboration throughout 2014 may be seen as a limitation on the efficacy of the narrative inquiry. I argue that it was necessary to manage the power imbalance during the period students were enrolled in the courses. Collaboration was also largely unnecessary and inappropriate during the process of data collection as one of the primary sources of data were students’ reflective essays and journals, which were assessable and therefore were required to be their own work.

Another limitation to the application of a narrative approach in this study is that inevitably, some voices will be heard more clearly than others and certain events or interpretations will be more prominent. It is simply not

possible within the confines of this study to present a complete and definitive picture of participants' experiences, however, the intention is to present a balanced depiction, acknowledging difference where possible. Barrett and Stauffer (2009a, 2009b) identify the discovery of different experiences, perspectives and voices through narrative inquiry as one of the essential features of the research approach which makes narrative *inquiry* rather than simply story. A number of factors were taken into consideration in order to present a balanced depiction of participants' experiences in this study. Perhaps the most important of these was managing the bias towards presenting an idealised version of events in an effort to support a conclusion of the success of collaborative learning in this context. To this end, students were encouraged to write about negative and positive experiences in their essays and journals and questionnaires explicitly stated that experiences could be "positive or negative" (see Appendix B). Whilst as teacher-participant I am a key figure in the research, I have devoted the better part of the reporting of results to students' experiences. This is to ensure that students' experiences are the primary focus of the study. My story as teacher-researcher runs through the entire study, but is only explicitly told in the final results chapter, Chapter 7. An entry in my teacher/researcher diary illustrates my concern with balance:

I think it is important for me to be recording my misgivings, fears, apprehensions, doubts as they are quite pervasive and this will provide a more well-rounded and perhaps credible picture of what is happening with these courses and how I am experiencing it. I actually don't want to make out it's all beer and skittles, because it certainly is

not!! (22 August, 2013)

To the extent possible, I have been conscious of balance throughout the study, but as a narrative researcher, I do not wish to discover the objective truth of the events of 2014. This accords with a narrative approach to research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webster & Mertova, 2007) and is discussed again in the context of the proposed credibility framework for this study at the end of Chapter 4.

3.4 Practitioner inquiry

This study is a practitioner inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Whilst rarely explicitly discussed as a research methodology, the fundamental concepts in practitioner inquiry align with the underlying philosophical assumptions and interpretive framework informing this study. The study's research design and methods also align with the underlying methodological assumptions in practitioner inquiry. I view my use of narrative inquiry in this study as falling within a broader practitioner-inquiry framework. This is because, as discussed further below, narrative inquiry has been used in education research both as a methodology and as a tool for professional development (Conle, 2000; 2001).

Until recent times, the voices of music educators themselves were rarely heard in music education research. Roberts (1994) argues that music education research was not at that time effecting meaningful changes in teaching and learning practice for two reasons:

The first is the lack of involvement of the teacher of music in the

research of the discipline; the second is the fact that the research paradigm that currently dominates our professional enterprise, which is unquestionably the psycho-statistical one, is a mode of research which is typically at odds with the way teachers view the social world in which they work, and hence this paradigm fails to offer new knowledge which is meaningful for teachers in the context of this professional social world. (p. 24)

Roberts advocates for music educators to become involved in research in order to feel a sense of ownership of research outcomes. He concludes that “[q]ualitative models provide opportunities not only to pursue research in a contextualized format but also to take advantage of the rather extensive lived experience that teacher-researchers can bring to bear on the analysis of the situation” (Roberts, 1994, p. 32). Roberts makes a persuasive argument for more research about music education done by music education insiders about lived experience, which yields meaningful results for the profession. This study aims to contribute to that body of knowledge.

More generally speaking, practitioner inquiry is related to action research but can also be located with the wider field of practice-based or applied research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) describe the characteristics of practitioner inquiry. The practitioner is the researcher and this insider status is valued. Practitioner inquiry emphasises community and collaboration—knowledge is constructed within the context of the local community and it is assumed that those who work in particular educational contexts have important knowledge about those contexts. As is the case with narrative

inquiry, notions of validity and generalizability for practitioner inquiry vary from traditional criteria. Practitioner inquiry is systematic and self-critical and aims for transparency—the work of inquiry must be open for critique. In addition, McWilliam (2004) notes that practitioner research focuses on a present problem, tends to move towards improving conditions of practice and is inherently unfinished and unfinishable. Because practitioner inquiry maintains that new knowledge is constructed from subjective experience and acknowledges the complexities inherent in this experience, the approach sits comfortably with the philosophical assumptions and interpretive framework for this study.

Practitioner inquiry values the insider's view. Roberts (1994) argues that music educators are ideally placed to research the field of music education because, in his own experience

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 required musical skills on the part of the participant. (p. 30)

The advantageous position of the insider to music education must be balanced by a constant vigilance towards bias and “situational blindness” (Roberts, 1994, p. 30). This tendency towards situational blindness is discussed in more detail in relation to my position as researcher later in this

chapter. However, at this stage it is salient to note that, because of my relationships with student participants, I was able to obtain their trust and finally their enthusiasm for and collaboration in this study. Because of the extensive time I spent with the students, I believe I was able to gain insights from the data which may not have been apparent to an outsider (Berger, 2015).

To summarise, this study falls squarely within a practitioner inquiry framework, as it seeks to create new knowledge for practice based on participants' experiences. The emphasis is on the local context. Students' voices are prominent within the study, as is my own voice as teacher/researcher. My position as insider to the research is an asset rather than a liability, but is managed through reflexivity and by viewing the work through the proposed credibility framework. I will now discuss the rationale for using a narrative approach in this study, the ways in which it was used and how this approach relates to practitioner inquiry.

3.5 Narrative inquiry

3.5.1 Rationale for the use of narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry is well suited to and widely used in education research (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009b; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1995; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Polkinghorne (1995) argues that

narrative is the linguistic form uniquely suited for displaying human existence as situated action. Narrative descriptions exhibit human activity as purposeful engagement in the world. Narrative is the type

of discourse composition that draws together diverse events, happenings, and actions of human lives into thematically unified goal-directed processes. (p. 5)

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue that because experience unfolds narratively, “educational experience should be studied narratively” (p. 19). Narrative inquiry is generally situated within a social constructivist interpretative framework. Narrative researchers in education take the view that “education and educational research is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; learners, teachers, and researchers are storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). This study focuses primarily on the construction and reconstruction, by me as researcher in collaboration with students, of these stories by various characters within the collaborative learning community.

Narrative inquiry fits well within the broader practitioner-inquiry approach to this study. The narrative approach can be used as both a method of inquiry and as a tool for professional development (Conle, 2000; Conle, 2001). One of the intended outcomes of practitioner research is improved practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; McWilliam, 2004). As both teacher and researcher, using a narrative approach has allowed me to operate reflexively throughout the period of data collection and analysis, in order to inquire into my own practice as teacher. My story as teacher is presented in Chapter 7. My story as researcher appears throughout this study (Braun & Clarke, 2013), both explicitly and implicitly. The narrative approach is useful to preserve the temporal and contextual detail of the subject under

examination (Conle, 2000). This focus on the local—the temporal and contextual detail—is another feature of much practitioner research. Wenger et al. (2011) contend that because learning communities take time to evolve, it is through narrative that we can best explore the learning which takes place in these communities and establish and promote the value created by them. The persons best placed to tell those stories are those who are members of the community—the students and teacher. Webster and Mertova (2007) argue that the complexities of professional experience cannot be summarised using statistics. With its focus on subjective experience, a narrative approach sits well within the philosophical and interpretive framework for this study and its dual purpose as both a research approach and a tool for professional development means that it aligns well with practitioner research.

As noted above, this study is based on a philosophical assumption that humans construct knowledge through subjective experience. In relation to educational research, Webster and Mertova (2007) identify the key philosophical issue as the relationship between “‘learning’ as a process and ‘knowledge’ based on the truth, or what is learnt” (p. 5). This relationship between the process of learning and its product—knowledge—is under examination in this study. As will be seen, the emphasis here falls on the process of collaborative learning and the products of that experience may not be those which we would usually expect to result from participation in

HME.³⁷ Narrative inquiry is best placed to discover the complexities of this process of learning and the end results for participants—the knowledge or skills gained—are ultimately identified by the participants themselves as the learning outcomes which matter to them. Such results would be difficult to achieve using quantitative methods (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

In summary, with its emphasis on discovering subjective experience and knowledge construction from this experience, narrative inquiry aligns well with the philosophical assumptions and interpretive framework outlined at the beginning of this chapter. A narrative approach is appropriate to explore learners' experiences and is able to capture the complex social nature of learners' interactions with each other. The approach can be used as both a method of inquiry and a tool for professional development—both purposes are relevant to this study as practitioner research. The emphasis in narrative inquiry on the local context aligns with the aims of practitioner inquiry more broadly. A narrative approach thus provides a suitable means by which participants' experiences can be collected, told and analysed to answer the first two research questions relating how the learning community builds agency and creates value.

3.5.2 Two branches of narrative inquiry

It is important to distinguish between narrative as a phenomenon and narrative as a method for inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The

³⁷ The knowledge generated or products of HME would generally be assumed to be musical in nature, for example, improved performance skills and improved ability on an instrument or voice.

phenomenon being studied is the *story* and the method of inquiry is *narrative* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In other words, narrative researchers can study stories as well as apply a narrative analysis to data to construct stories. In a similar vein, based on Bruner's (1985) designation of two types of cognition, Polkinghorne (1995) outlines two branches of narrative inquiry, both of which are used in this study. Bruner (1985) distinguishes between paradigmatic knowledge which identifies commonalities amongst actions and narrative knowledge which details the unique characteristics of actions. Polkinghorne (1995) uses these designations to differentiate between *analysis of narratives*—paradigmatic-type narrative inquiry—and *narrative analysis*—narrative-type narrative inquiry. Summarising the difference between the two approaches succinctly, Polkinghorne (1995) notes that: “analysis of narratives moves from stories to common elements, and narrative analysis moves from elements to stories” (p. 12). Whereas the result of analysis of narratives is most commonly a set of themes, the result of a narrative analysis is a story. Using both approaches separately as well as in combination in this study is intended to produce rich results relating to participants' experiences and to enable the reader to view these experiences as both a set of commonalities, as well as detailed individual experiences. The ways in which each branch of narrative inquiry was used to analyse the data are discussed in Chapter 4.

3.6 Researcher's position

Given the researcher's position as insider in much narrative inquiry, one of the central tenets of the approach is “careful observance of and attention to the relational aspects of inquiry” (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009b, p.

12). *Relational* in this sense incorporates not only relationships between researcher and researched, but the researchers relationship to place, their own personal past, present and future and the broader social framework within which they operate (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009b; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) identify that the researcher's own narrative of experience is one of the starting points for and central to, narrative inquiry.

The following discussion is offered as a short autobiography, which interrogates my beliefs and experiences as a student, teacher and musician. It identifies and explains the ways in which my positionality (Clough & Nutbrown, 2007; Creswell, 2013) has impacted this study. I outline my various roles within this study and the ways these roles have been managed. Reflexivity is a key feature of qualitative research whereby researchers outline their background and how it informs their interpretation of the data (Berger, 2015; Clough & Nutbrown, 2007; Creswell, 2013). Berger (2015) notes that “[r]eflexivity is commonly viewed as the process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of researcher's positionality as well as active acknowledgement and explicit recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcome” (p. 220). As noted previously, I occupy multiple roles within the context of this study—teacher, researcher and researched. This positionality is relevant to power relations, ethics and the trustworthiness of my findings (Berger, 2015; Herr & Anderson, 2005; O'Leary, 2004). My inquiry stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) towards my teaching has required me to question the fundamental goals of my own teaching and, more broadly, the nature and purpose of music practice within

HME. This questioning is undoubtedly informed by my own previous experiences, both as a professional musician, educator and learner.

3.6.1 Managing subjectivities, bias and power imbalance

There is potential in this study for me as teacher/researcher to be sensitive to results that appear to be critical of the learning environment or of me as a teacher. Measures were taken to ensure that students reflected on positive and negative experiences and I have striven to present a balanced interpretation of these experiences. I used the teacher/researcher diary as a reflexive tool to explore my own biases. The use of an existing conceptual framework for some of the data collection helped to mitigate bias in framing questions in the student questionnaires. The power imbalance between the students and me is acknowledged and was continually monitored. It did however cause me to be wary of collaborating with the students during the phase of research design and data collection. As discussed above, it was not until assessment was finalised that I was able to view my students as research collaborators. O’Leary (2004) notes that “recognizing the power and privilege associated with your own attributes, set within your research context, is the first step in the negotiation of power” (p. 44). My teacher/researcher diary enabled me to reflect on my own position, background and tendencies, with a view to managing the impact on the study of my subjectivity, bias and the power relationship between the students and me (Berger, 2015).

I kept the teacher/researcher diary for 18 months during this study commencing in July 2013. The diary served as a check and balance for the

research process and as a source of data in answering my research questions. It was also a tool for being reflexive and honing that skill. Keeping a journal can greatly assist in creating transparency in the research process (Ortlipp, 2008). My diary also contains evidence of the research trail in terms of the emergent methodology and research questions (Creswell, 2013; Ortlipp, 2008). The diary was a means of triangulating other data sources and identifying salient events in the process of narrative analysis (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The ways in which the diary was used as a data source and triangulation method are discussed in more detail in the following chapter on research design.

3.6.2 Researcher's background

It is useful to acknowledge that there is a narrative running through this entire study. In addition to the stories which constitute the data and results, as researcher I tell the story of this study. The following section outlines my personal, educational and professional background, to make transparent the subjectivity informing the story of this study and to provide an insight into my biases as researcher.

I am female, white, middle-class, tertiary-educated, middle-aged, conservatory trained and employed by an Australian regional university. I have had experience as a tertiary student in the disciplines of law, English literature and music, completing a performance major in jazz voice. My experiences of higher education inform to some extent the approach I have chosen in this study and in particular, the introduction and exploration of a collaborative model for music practice.

My first higher education experience was earning degrees in Arts (English literature) and Law. This experience was very much a mixed one—I valued highly the critical thinking I developed as a result of my literature studies and I deeply resented the transmission model of legal education in vogue at the time—the early 1990s. Where my English lecturers were engaged on a deeper and more personalised level with students, law lecturers remained largely aloof, unapproachable and God-like. Law students often complained loudly about the way in which our lectures and tutorials were conducted, but at that time, students simply did not have the voice they now have in higher education.

My HME experience studying for a Bachelor of Music during the early 2000s was quite different. I found this experience difficult for more complex reasons. The conservatory I trained in had a culture of unofficially ordaining certain students as those most likely to succeed as performers or inherently gifted. It was very difficult for those not so ordained to live in the shadow of these students. Performance was valued absolutely over and above any other possible use for music in one's professional life. For me this created a very narrow and skewed version of the potential for music to liberate me from my day job as a lawyer—I could either become a successful performer with an international profile or fail by doing something

else in music.³⁸ I feel that I learnt much of my practical musical skills doing paid gigs as a corporate singer and that my formal learning did not provide much in the way of a holistic view of how music works and is done.

However, the relationships I formed during my time studying music were of critical importance to my development both musically and personally and I maintain many of these relationships to this day. I feel that the major benefit I gained from my musical education were these ongoing relationships.

Luckily, these relationships grew through happenstance, but they could have been better cultivated by our learning experiences at the time.

These experiences have undoubtedly informed my own teaching and the desire to conduct the current study. Studies show that teacher identity influences the way we teach music (Bjøntegaard, 2015). I have never wanted to hold myself out as a master of music, or anything else—I don't like the term *master* and I certainly don't identify with it as a musician. I have tended to feel like an imposter in the musical world, mostly, I think, because I arrived so late to it compared to my peers—I started undergraduate studies in music when I was 28. In my teaching of music, I wanted to help students learn, but I never wanted to dictate to them. One senior colleague's advice to new lecturers is to demonstrate mastery in front of the students, at all times. I simply can't do that! When I read about

³⁸ Allsup and Westerlund (2012) use slightly stronger language to describe this tendency within conservatories to encourage the pursuit of musical excellence at any cost: "justification for social harm incurred through the pursuit of musical excellence or musical achievement is a morally repugnant act, though one that is so exceedingly common to anyone who has attended a typical conservatory or School of Music that no supporting illustration is even necessary" (p. 138).

Persson's (1994) "Maestro" I see none of myself in that type of music teacher. I do not have the confidence in my musical abilities to conduct myself as a master. These personal traits may have resulted in me giving too little guidance to my own students at times and I am constantly striving to find the balance between sharing knowledge with students and allowing them the freedom to experiment. I also wanted to be inclusive of students who didn't aspire to be performers. I wanted to open their eyes to the possibilities that music can hold beyond performing. These ideas informed the design of the new collaborative learning environment in 2012. The other important contributing aspect of my own experience was the importance of my relationships with other musicians. I wanted to create a way for these relationships to be actively cultivated within students' formal learning experiences.

I tend to have very high expectations of myself and others and this has sometimes had a negative impact on my teaching. At times and despite my own best intentions and my own experiences as a music student, I have found myself labelling certain students as *good* and others as *bad*. During the early years of my teaching, this differentiation was based on practical ability. Later, I wrote in my teacher/researcher diary:

The other issue I've been really grappling with is actually my own prejudices. I still really want people to be "good" and by that I mean, I really want people to do work and to try. I can honestly say that I'm not wanting people to be "good" at music necessarily, but I do really want people to try. (22 August, 2013)

In this passage, I can identify my desire for all students to try and for all students to be engaged. It is clear to me now that, in this passage, I simply supplanted one definition of good for another and that neither definition is particularly helpful when dealing with students' complex lives. There are numerous instances of reflection such as this which have helped me gain a more critical perspective on the learning environment and my role within it. Given my predilection for high expectations and my experiences as a music student where performance ability was so highly valued, I believe to a certain extent I subconsciously designed the collaborative learning environment to counteract my own stereotypes of good and bad students and to be able to recognise students' contributions in myriad ways, not simply on the basis of musical excellence.

I admit that during the early iterations of this learning model, I was eager for it to be perceived as a success. Sometimes I took criticism of the model personally. One entry in my diary contains a confession that I "went ballistic" at a sessional teacher who conveyed to me that some local school teachers were "bagging" developments in the music discipline at USQ (Teacher/researcher diary, 6 September, 2013). However, as this study progressed, I have become more comfortable with the likelihood that the end results would ultimately be mixed and more complicated than simply constituting success or failure. My ability to critically reflect has improved as a result of discussions with colleagues, engaging with the literature for this study and recording my thoughts in my diary. This has enabled me to identify bias and minimise it to the extent that it is possible. This ability to be self-critical is essential to effectively adopting an inquiry stance in my

research and teaching (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009).

Another potential source of bias is my position as lecturer within the university. If the experience of the model is largely a negative one, this could potentially have an impact on the way I am viewed by my employer. Alternatively, if the experience is very positive, this could be viewed as having an impact on such things as promotion. Both outcomes have implications for my professional reputation. Again, presenting a more balanced depiction of participants' experiences can help mitigate any tendency towards a more extreme interpretation of these experiences.

The power imbalance between me and the student participants is one which I have been acutely aware of since applying for human ethical clearance. This power imbalance is a common critique of practitioner inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). A number of the students were school leavers who were young and inexperienced with higher education. I felt it was important that they felt no pressure whatsoever to participate in this study, nor to continue in it if they changed their minds. I kept talk of the study to a minimum throughout the year, lest they feel that their marks for the course were in anyway contingent upon or confused with their participation in this study. Herr and Anderson (2005) note many argue that due to the insider status of the researcher in practitioner research, it should always be collaborative. Collaboration is also a strong feature of much narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As previously mentioned, due to the power imbalance, it was difficult to conceptualize or realize the student participants as collaborative researchers during the year of data collection and teaching. This changed once the academic year had finished

and results were analysed and finalised. These same students helped me significantly in crafting the value creation stories presented in Chapter 7. They became collaborators once the business of assessment finished.

Overall, my personal history as a tertiary student has informed the introduction of collaborative learning at USQ and the course of this study. I acknowledge that my tendency is to desire success in everything I do and I expect myself to achieve this in such a way that I manage to please everybody! I know this is unrealistic and I have worked hard to manage these expectations of myself and the students throughout this study. I hope that balance has been achieved and that, in addition to positive participant experiences, the stories presented in this study demonstrate that working collaboratively to learn music practice is not all “beer and skittles” (Teacher/researcher diary, 22 August, 2013).

3.7 Chapter summary

This chapter outlined the research approaches adopted in this study. I discussed the relationship of this study—which focuses on experience—to the broader field of qualitative research in music education. This research makes an original contribution to this field by considering, not the values of music and music education per se in an HME context, but the contextual conditions in which a learner is “likely to experience the personal positive value of his or her music education” (Westerlund, 2008, p. 80). I then discussed the underlying philosophical assumptions I make as researcher—that knowledge is a human construction, reality is multivalent and that this study is value-laden—and identified social constructivism as an appropriate

interpretative framework for the research. To manage subjectivity and bias, I identified the several roles I occupy in this study—teacher, researcher and researched. I acknowledged the ways in which these various roles have impacted on the use of collaborative learning at USQ and the design and focus of this study. I identified the research approach as narrative inquiry, positioned within a broader framework of practitioner research. Two types of narrative research were outlined, both of which are used in this study—analysis of narrative and narrative analysis. I then detailed my personal background as relevant to this study. The following chapter details how the research approaches were carried out. I describe the research design—participant selection and ethical considerations, data collection methods and data analysis—and suggest a framework for assessing the findings as credible.

Chapter 4. Research Design

The previous chapter discussed the rationale for the research approaches and focus adopted in this study and positioned the research within the broader field of qualitative research in music education. This chapter outlines the ways in which the research was designed and conducted in order to discover the complexities of participants' experiences. I discuss the processes of applying narrative approaches to the data, including participant selection and ethical considerations, data collection methods, collation and analysis. I conclude this chapter with a proposed framework within which the findings of this study might be assessed as credible.

4.1 Participant selection and ethics

The participant pool was defined as those students enrolled in MUI1001 and MUI1002 in on campus mode for 2014.³⁹ A standard process for making initial contact and recruitment was used. Enrolled students received an email from the head of school outlining the study and their potential role in it, should they consent to participate (see Appendix C). This email attached electronic versions of the information sheet for participants and the consent form. This documentation addressed the issues of what participants would experience, voluntary participation, expected benefits of the research, risks to participants, confidentiality, conflict of interest, the relationship between the research and course-related group activity, contact

³⁹ All MUI coded courses at USQ are also offered in online mode. Online students did not form part of the participant pool.

details and privacy. During the first class of the year, one of my colleagues outlined the research project for students and explained the participant information and consent form. Hard copies of the consents and information sheets were provided to students during this class. All consent forms were collected, whether signed or unsigned. 21 out of 24 students signed the consent forms. One student elected to consent later in the semester, making a total of 22 consenting participants.

Ethical clearance was given for this study (see Appendix C). Several issues required addressing in order to gain this approval. The primary ethical concern was the unequal relationship between teacher/researcher and first year university students, some of whom were under 18 years of age, but no younger than 17. The final ethical clearance allowed these students to be the principal consenting agent rather than a guardian, given that the risks inherent in participating in the research were low. The unequal relationship between teacher/researcher and students was managed within the context of the research by adhering to the ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, justice and informed consent. It was made clear that participation was voluntary and that non-participation would not impact on students' ability to remain in the courses, nor would it affect their assessments. It was also apparent to me as researcher that any attempt to exploit the unequal relationship would be contrary to the ideals informing collaborative learning itself. Through ongoing reflexivity, I have been conscious during the study to situate myself as non-exploitative and compassionate (Berger, 2015) towards the student participants.

In 2014, 24 students enrolled in MUI1001 semester one and only 11

finished S2, which included one new commencing student in S2. This study does not seek to uncover the motivations for students not continuing on to semester two—referred to as *non-continuing students*. A total of 11 students did not enrol in MUI1002 in semester two and two students withdrew during semester two. The drop in enrolments from semester one to semester two can be explained in part by the following: six students failed the semester one course, four of those for non-participation, meaning they handed in no, or incomplete, assessments; one student did not come back from the mid-semester break; two students went on to continue in Education degrees in semester two rather than the Bachelor of Creative Arts; one student became pregnant; one student took the semester one course as an elective to complete her acting degree; one student was a mature-aged student who decided to discontinue further university study for family reasons; and two students withdrew during the course of semester two. It was not possible to obtain data from most failing students due to the fact that a large component of the data were student essays and journals which were not handed in for assessment. There was no opportunity to seek explanations from non-continuing students, nor did it seem appropriate, so it is not possible to speculate whether the collaborative learning environment itself played a role in students' decisions not to continue. This could, however, be the subject of future research and the issue is discussed further in Chapter 9.

In assessing whether to include for analysis incomplete data from non-continuing students where available, the following factors were taken into account:

- Including incomplete data could skew the analysis, as doing so would be akin to comparing much longer and in-depth experiences with those who were only in the course/s for a shorter period of time.
- The aim of this study is to discover students' experiences of the entire 2014 academic year. My prolonged engagement in the field with participants is important to establish the validity of the research, discussed further below.
- A study on why students failed or did not continue study is beyond the scope of this study.
- Treating non-continuing students as a separate data set is problematic, as the data from these students in some cases are non-existent or sparse at best.
- It has been my experience in teaching these courses that it takes the year for strong relationships to form between teachers and students and amongst the students themselves.

For the sake of consistency, data from the student who completed semester two only were excluded from analysis. It has been noted earlier that I co-taught the class in semester one of 2014. Again, for the sake of consistency, I have not collected data from this teacher. He has, however, acted as a reader of the research and was relied upon as a credibility checker. This is discussed at the end of this chapter within the context of the credibility

framework for the study.⁴⁰

Narrative inquiry requires that the “researcher select a bounded system for the study” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 15). In this study, the bounded system was the 2014 academic year in which students completed the year. The final number of student participants was ($N=10$). Braun and Clarke (2013) suggest that for participant-generated textual data, a sample size of 10-30 participants is acceptable, but this depends on the scope of the study and the amount of data generated by the participants. The sample size in this study is at the lower end of Braun and Clarke’s acceptable range. Because of the descriptive nature of this study, however, the sample size and data generated are sufficient to arrive at a thick description. This study does not aim to extrapolate from the findings to make generalisations about collaborative learning as would be done in a case study, but rather to illuminate experiences of a specific context. In this respect, a larger sample size would not help further the aim of the study.

This study examines the experiences of students who completed the year. All student names are pseudonyms—Cate, John, Maddie, Hope, Tamika, Jack, Mark, Shane, Gemma and Jane. Because of the small participant pool, students have not been associated with their main instrument. In any event, the nature of the instrument each student played is irrelevant to answering the research questions. Gender was relatively evenly

⁴⁰ Other studies such as those by Ilomaki (2011) and Latukefu (2010) also had to address the issue of students withdrawing from the courses under investigation.

split within the pool, with male students (n = 4) and female (n = 6). Students were mostly in the 17–20 age bracket (n = 7) with some mature-aged students (aged 30 and over) (n = 3). Principal instruments for the students were voice (n = 5), guitar (n = 1), piano (n = 2), drums (n = 1) and saxophone (n = 1). The main instrument of each participant is included merely to demonstrate some of the instrument combinations that were possible in the various ensembles, although inevitably almost every student played an instrument other than their main instrument or sang in their ensembles during the year. Where the mention of an instrument in the data could potentially identify a student, the name of the instrument has been removed and the word *instrument* used in its place.

4.2 Methods—data collection, collation and analysis

Whilst Creswell (2013) emphasises the use of interview as the primary data collection method in narrative inquiry, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) provide a more extensive list including, amongst other methods, field notes, journals, interview transcripts, observations of others and class plans. Webster and Mertova (2007) acknowledge that data for narrative inquiry can come from many different sources and they include surveys and questionnaires as data sources. In this study, interview data was eschewed in favour of students' reflective essays and journals and short answer

questionnaires for a number of reasons, discussed further below.⁴¹ Because of my insider status, it was not practical for me to keep field notes because I was teaching, but instead I maintained a teacher/researcher diary. Data were also collected in the form of attendance and assessment records. Table 2 is an overview of the various data sources for this study and the ways in which the data relate to the research questions and thesis structure.

There were a number of reasons for collecting multiple types of data. Whilst students' essays and reflections were loosely guided in terms of their content due to their assessable nature, questionnaires provided the opportunity to elicit more targeted information from students, based upon the theoretical framework for this study. The teacher/researcher diary helped track important events as and when they happened and contained my own perspective which was not present in any of the other data. Finally, the use of some quantitative indicators such as attendance and assessment or performance data is encouraged in Wenger et al.'s (2011) framework to create a robust picture of value creation. Multiple data sources were required to ensure that a comprehensive portrait of participants' experiences could be crafted from the data and to act as a form of data triangulation (Bryman, 2001; Creswell, 2013).

⁴¹ The Information Sheet for students provided as part of the informed consent process (see Appendix C) mentions an additional data source, *one minute papers*. These papers are a short reflection on learning completed by students at the end of each class. As the aim of the study became clearer, this data source was considered superfluous to answering the research questions on students' experiences. Such decisions regarding data sources are in keeping with the emergent nature of the research design in much qualitative research (Creswell, 2013).

Table 2—Data collection, collation and analysis

Source	Collection	Collation	Analysis	Research question	Thesis
Student essays and journals (67,651 words)	Part of student assessment; submitted electronically through USQ system at the end of semesters one and two	Copied and pasted into NVIVO and collated for each student	Thematic analysis of student narratives	1	Ch 5
			Narrative analysis to produce value creation stories	2	Ch 7
Student short answer questionnaires	Collected three times during the year at the end of class: Cycle 1 11 June, 2014 Cycle 2 17 Sept, 2014 Cycles 3-5 29 Oct, 2014	Transcribed into Word format, copied and pasted in NVIVO and collated for each student	Data restoried for each student; thematic analysis of narratives to distil value indicators	2	Ch 6
			Narrative analysis to produce value creation stories	2	Ch 7
Teacher/researcher diary (15,722 words)	July 2013–November 2014		Narrative analysis of diary to produce value creation stories	2	Ch 7
Attendance and assessment records	Weekly class rolls Student assessment results entered into USQ Moodle system end of semesters	Attendance App USQ Moodle system	Used as value indicators (Wenger et al., 2011)	2	Ch 6
All data sources			Paradigm reflection on results	3	Ch 8

Why not interviews or focus groups? Qualitative researchers collect data in a natural setting, in ways which are sensitive to participants and the context (Creswell, 2013). Due to the unequal relationship between teacher and students, I deemed interviews and focus groups to be inappropriate means of data collection. Bearing in mind the age and experience of some participants, I felt they might be uncomfortable in an interview or focus

group setting and may be wary of expressing less favourable opinions about the learning community. Furthermore, I felt it may be challenging to myself as teacher/researcher to keep my biases and values hidden from students in interviews and focus groups (Ortlipp, 2008). I considered the extra burden that interviews or focus groups would place on the students. I was aware that my participant pool was comprised of first year university students who were making an important lifestyle adjustment and I did not want to add any further expectations or time commitments to their already busy schedules. The data collection methods ultimately used required no further time commitment from students other than class time and the time they would usually devote to completing assessment tasks. I felt that this was the best way to ensure that the data were collected in a way which was sensitive to the students in this context.

Why not video data? Unlike other studies into learning environments (e.g. Daniel, 2005; Rikandi, 2012, 2013), I chose not to use video as a data source. From an ethical perspective, video data were not appropriate because some students did not consent to participate. Any video data would inevitably contain footage of non-consenting students. Whilst this could be excluded from analysis, given the power imbalance between teacher and students, I deemed this method inappropriate—I did not feel comfortable videoing students if they had not consented. From a practical perspective it was not possible to have video cameras present in all the various rehearsal rooms during class time. Finally, given the focus on subjective experience in this study, video data, which is essentially a form of observation, were not appropriate. The following section elaborates on the information in

Table 2 and discusses each data source in more detail, including methods of collection, collation and analysis. I relate the discussion to how the process addressed the research questions.

4.2.1 Teacher/researcher's diary

In addition to being an aid for developing and maintaining reflexivity, the diary was used as a memory aid and as a means of identifying critical insights into my own experience as teacher for the purposes of articulating my own experiences of the learning community. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) identify journals or diaries as a typical data source in narrative inquiry. The diary was maintained for a period of 17 months from July 2013 to November 2014 and became an important data source for the collective value creation story of the learning community and my personal value creation stories, presented in Chapter 7, as the diary is the only data source containing my experiences. The diary was also used as a means of triangulating students' recollections of events for the purposes of drafting the value creation stories. The use of triangulation methods and its role in building credible narratives is discussed at the end of this chapter.

4.2.2 Student essays and journals

As part of their assessment for MUI1001 and MUI1002, students were required to complete two reflective essays and a journal. During 2013, I ran a trial of data collection. In reading students' journals, I felt the quality of the reflections could have been better—many tended to provide a shopping list of tasks completed, rather than reflections on critical learning events. During 2014, I gave students more guidance on how to properly reflect on

learning and to this end we used sections from the textbook *Preparing For Success: A Practical Guide for Young Musicians* (Hallam & Gaunt, 2012) to help guide reflections. This resulted in much richer student accounts for the 2014 cohort than in previous years. Once the data were collated for the 2014 cohort there were almost 68,000 words of student reflections, an average of approximately 6,800 words per participant. These essays and journals are used to answer research question 1 on how participation built students' agency.

Data quality and reliability. As could be expected when no word limit is set for a writing task, some students wrote more than others. Some students were also inevitably more adept at recording and reflecting on their experiences than others and this was reflected in their final results for their assessment. However, overall, the quality of the content of the reflections for the 2014 cohort was of a reasonably high standard. Table 3 contains the results for each student for their journal and essay tasks to support the claim of quality of the data. For the ten students in the study, all completed the tasks required to be included in the analysis.

Table 3—Student results for essay and journal tasks

Student	Semester one	Semester two
Cate	86	90
Hope	68	85
Maddie	86	88
Jack	78	92
Tamika	60	68
Mark	90	86
Gemma	52	72
Jane	75	93
Shane	90	88
John	70	75
Average	75.5	83.7

Data reliability typically refers to “the possibility of generating the same results when the same measures are administered by different

researchers to a different group”, (Braun & Clarke, 2013, Chapter 12, Reliability, para. 1). However, I acknowledge that the students’ experiences of this particular context are unlikely to be replicated with a different cohort of students at a different time. The experiences of students as recounted and reflected upon in their own words are taken at face value as being an accurate and reliable account of their experience and context-bound. For a study such as this, Braun and Clarke conceptualize reliability more broadly as *trustworthiness* and *dependability* of data collection methods and analysis (see also O’Leary, 2004).

Collection and collation of essays and journals. Students submitted their assessment electronically using an in-house online system called ePortfolio. No other students were able to access the data, as ePortfolio has a built-in privacy mechanism—students must share their ePortfolio with specific users. Collation of data involved the following:

- locating the relevant pages in the student’s ePortfolio;
- copying and pasting each journal entry or reflective essay from the page into a document created in NVIVO for that student;
- copying and pasting each NVIVO entry for each student into a single Word document, for the purposes of initial data familiarisation in hard-copy; and
- cross-checking that each journal entry and essay had been successfully and completely copied into NVIVO and Word.

Coding and thematic analysis using NVIVO did not commence until all data were collected and compiled. Two initial readings of the data were

completed—a process of data familiarisation—one for the purposes of assessing the students in the online ePortfolio system and one using hard copy. The dataset was read completely five times in total and many times in various parts.

Development of coding scheme and analysis of narratives.

Students' essays and journals are forms of *storied data* (Polkinghorne, 1995), ordered chronologically for the year and individually by participant. These data are *diachronic*, in that they “contain temporal information about the sequential relationship of events” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 12). Thematic analysis—a form of paradigmatic analysis which searches for commonalities across the data set—was used to analyse the storied data. The coding scheme for the analysis was developed inductively through a process of complete coding (Braun & Clarke, 2013) which required a reading of the entire data set numerous times. This process involves:

the recursive movement from noted similar instances in the data to researcher-proposed categorical and conceptual definitions. Through these recursions, the proposed definitions are altered until they reach a “best fit” ordering of the data as a collection of particular instances of the derived categories. (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 13)

Codes were developed based on features of the data relevant to students' experience. An initial lengthy list of over twenty codes was shortened to the final list which consisted of the following codes: “feelings about experiences”; “how learning occurred”; “what learning occurred”; “group identity”; “value of working in small groups”; “challenges of working in

small groups?”. Evidence for each code was gathered and each code was present in most of the data sources—in this instance, *source* refers to a specific entry from a student in either semester one or semester two. Chapter 5 presents the results of applying thematic analysis to the storied data. The resulting themes were then viewed through Karlsen’s (2011) lens to answer research question 1 relating to the ways in which participation built individual and collective agency.

4.2.3 Framework data

Questionnaire data from students and other quantitative data were collected using Wenger et al.’s (2011) conceptual framework, *Promoting and Assessing Value Creation in Communities and Networks*. These data were used to answer research question 2 regarding the ways in which the collaborative learning created value for participants and other stakeholders. First, questionnaire and quantitative data were used to assess the indicators of value for the learning community. These results are presented in Chapter 6. The students’ essays and journals and the teacher/researcher diary were combined with the framework data to write the value creation stories presented in Chapter 7.

The framework encourages the use of multiple data sources, which can be collected over a period of time across *cycles of value creation*. Questionnaire data were collected three times during the year and a class roll was maintained to generate data relating to student attendance. I used data on students’ assessment for an indicator relating to performance (Wenger et al., 2011). Generally speaking, the use of questionnaires

establishes a broad view of participant experience (Clough & Nutbrown, 2007). In this study, the questionnaire method was expanded to cover a range of cycles of experience and was designed to provide a more detailed and holistic view of participant experience than a single questionnaire. Appendix B contains the questions in the questionnaire instruments. From the pilot study, it became apparent that some students did not understand what certain questions were asking of them. For example, in the final cycle questionnaire, students in 2013 struggled to answer the question, “What has the university been able to achieve as a result of your participation?” For this reason, more guidance was provided to students during the administration of questionnaires during 2014. I remained present for all questionnaires and we read through the questions together as a class. I provided brief explanations of the more complex questions and I answered queries from students about what questions meant. This resulted in better quality and quantity of data from the 2014 cohort compared to the 2013 group. Almost all questions were based on sample questions in the framework.

Collection, collation and analysis. The dates for administration of the questionnaires were chosen strategically to ensure students would be in attendance. Students’ answers were handwritten and then collected by me at the end of class. I later transcribed the answers into Microsoft Word and copied the Word documents into NVIVO. These initial transcriptions included the text of the questions. Using NVIVO, the questions and answers for each cycle for each student were collated, so they could be read together, forming an overall picture of the year and the various cycles. Questionnaires

were mostly well answered by students, however, in some cases students did not provide detailed responses to certain questions, or left questions blank.

The data were restoried (Booth & Kellogg, 2014; Creswell, 2013) for each participant into prose form which mirrored generally the cycles of value creation and hence the order of the questionnaires, situating responses chronologically according to semester and cycle. This particular use of restorying the data employed a simple form of narrative analysis to craft the data into basic stories. Some temporal indicators were added to the data to ensure the plots for each story flowed logically. Additionally, where students' answers did not incorporate the question, this was added to the restoried version to provide context. In some cases, errors in grammar and spelling were corrected to enhance readability. Because these restoried versions were almost entirely students' own words, they were not member-checked. A paradigmatic approach—thematic analysis—was then used to establish the key indicators of the value created by the learning community present within the restoried data.

The process of developing the coding scheme and themes for the survey data was different to that which occurred for the data from students' essays and journals. The coding scheme for that data was emergent. For the survey data, the framework provided the means by which the data were collected, coded and analysed (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Using the

indicators from the framework as an a priori coding scheme⁴² the stories were analysed and evidence gathered relevant to each cycle of value creation. I then summarised the relevant cyclical evidence to establish the primary indicators for each cycle.

Writing the value creation stories. In contrast to analysis of narratives, narrative analysis is used to gather data relating to events, which are then crafted into stories. These stories constitute the results of the analysis. Webster and Mertova (2007) identify a range of data-gathering techniques appropriate for the task of constructing these types of narratives including surveys, observations and interviews. In this study, narrative analysis of various data types—student questionnaires, events in student reflections and events in the teacher/researcher diary—was used to craft a set of value creation stories. The analytic task involved developing a plot for each story from the data which “displays the linkage among the data elements as parts of an unfolding temporal development culminating in the denouement” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 15). Webster and Mertova note that the ability of narrative to capture and communicate critical events makes it a powerful tool for researchers. This approach was used to present the results in Chapter 7 to answer research question 2 on the value created by participation in collaborative learning for participants and other stakeholders.

The framework provides templates for the collection and organisation

⁴² The approach was adopted from Booth and Kellogg (2014).

of data for value creation stories. Narrative analysis was used to write an initial draft of each value creation story using the combined data sources outlined above. Drafting was guided by the templates and the following questions, also from the framework:

1. What meaningful activities did you participate in?
2. What specific insights did you gain? What access to useful information or material?
3. How did this influence your practice? What did it enable that would not have happened otherwise?
- 4a. What difference did it make to your performance? How did this contribute to your personal/professional development?
- 4b. How did this contribute to the goal of the organization?
Qualitatively? Quantitatively?
5. Has this changed your or some other stakeholder's understanding of what matters? (Wenger et al., 2011, p. 35)

A closed Facebook group was created with participating students for validating individual stories and to work collaboratively on the collective story of the learning community. This group was not publicly accessible. The means of communicating through Facebook was chosen for a number of reasons. Whilst I do not ordinarily communicate with students in this way, in this instance the medium was practical, as I was on leave at the time and did not have regular face-to-face contact with the students. Students'

engagement with Facebook is high and they usually respond quite promptly. Additionally, John was taking a break from university and Gemma had left to pursue another career, meaning I had limited means of contacting them. The process of refining the collective story and member-checking individual stories was conducted over a period of weeks until the stories reached their final form.

Whilst narrative analysis is commonly used to produce a single story relating to a single subject, it can also be used to create “a set of profiles or vignettes that, alongside each other, provide greater insight and understanding of the topic than any single vignette” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 21). Chapter 7 contains a number vignettes, in that they focus on a particular event and the consequences of that event for the protagonist. In this sense, these vignettes are in the style of a short *critical event* narrative described by Webster and Mertova (2007). Wenger et al. (2011) refer to these stories as *specific value creation stories*. The story of the community and my story as teacher are lengthier narratives. In their own way, these larger stories are also based on critical events, in that they explore moments of insight, revelation or changes in understanding, or simply detail events which impacted participants (Webster & Mertova, 2007). All stories are mapped onto a *value creation matrix* (Wenger et al., 2011) to represent value creation conceptually and to support the argument of value creation. The matrix presents each story in relation to the value indicators.

4.3 Credibility framework

4.3.1 General criteria for assessing credibility of qualitative research

Having discussed my methods for data collection, collation and analysis, the following section proposes a framework within which to assess the findings of my analysis as valid and credible. Creswell (2013) outlines the vast spectrum of perspectives put forward by various researchers regarding the terms used for reliability of data and validation of results in qualitative research. This spectrum ranges from using criteria adapted from quantitative research, for example, internal and external validity, to the formulation of alternative terms, to the dismissal of validity in its entirety as being unimportant to qualitative research. O’Leary’s (2004) framework provides a middle ground which strives to take into account the post-positivist perspective of much qualitative research. O’Leary maintains that research must demonstrate the ways in which subjectivities have been managed. The research should be transparent on the topic of subjectivity by disclosing positionality and the ways in which this might impact on the research process and the conclusions (see also Berger, 2015). Methods should be approached with consistency. Rather than reliability, O’Leary proposes dependability as the appropriate criterion for judging the use of methods in research—methods should be systematic, well-documented and designed to account for research subjectivities (see also Webster & Mertova, 2007). Findings may not be generalizable, but they may be transferable beyond the immediate context. Finally, the research should be auditable to the extent that methods are fully explained to demonstrate to the reader how and why conclusions were reached (O’Leary, 2004).

In addition to the varying perspectives and terms regarding research validity, Creswell (2013) summarises eight practical strategies qualitative researchers can choose from and apply in their research to establish validity. Creswell suggests that researchers use at least two of these strategies. The following describes the ways in which each strategy was applied in this study:

- “prolonged engagement and persistent observation” (Creswell, 2013, p. 250)—I have been engaged in the field which is the subject of this study for three successive cohorts of students (2012, 2013, 2014). Throughout the subject year of 2014, I built trust with student participants and was able to observe closely the intricacies of the relationships between them.
- “triangulation” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251)—Triangulation usually refers to the use of multiple and different sources to gather data and provide corroborating evidence. Within the field of narrative inquiry, triangulation is a contested strategy (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Triangulation is not used here to present objective truth but rather a credible account of participants’ experiences (Polkinghorne, 1995). Webster and Mertova (2007) refine triangulation in relation to narrative inquiry and suggest that a framework of *critical* events, *like* events and *other* events is more appropriate. In this study, questionnaire data, essay and journal data and my teacher/researcher diary provided a means of classifying events and ensuring that the resulting narratives were representative of this taxonomy. For example, in the value creation story of the learning community itself,

data from all participants, including my own data, were used to create a credible account. This account includes *critical* events—events which are unique, illustrative and confirmatory—*like* events—events which further confirm critical events—and *other* events—events which were not necessarily experienced by most participants but which are nonetheless illustrative (Webster & Mertova, 2007). In seeking validation from students on the overall story, they were asked to consider whether the description applied to some or all participants even if they did not have the experience themselves, in an attempt to cover the field of events outlined by Webster and Mertova (2007). Conversely, some *other* events were included where they were considered to be of vital importance to the flow and meaning of the narrative.⁴³

- “peer review or debriefing” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251)—My research diary reveals the extent to which debriefing with one particular colleague, Bruce, was instrumental in refining my thinking throughout the study (particularly during the pilot phase of 2013) and for managing my subjectivity. An entry from 22 August, 2013 reads: “[t]he full challenge of what I’ve taken on at USQ has only begun to dawn on me in the last few months—possibly as a result of having Bruce there to discuss things and to have another viewpoint.”

⁴³ An example is the impact of students leaving the course on remaining students. Some students did not consider this an important part of the narrative of the learning community at all. Others felt it gave them an excellent opportunity to reflect on their own motivations for learning. Ultimately, the inclusion of this *other* event was agreed upon by the group.

My discussions with Bruce are mentioned frequently in the diary. Bruce acted as a *critical friend* (Hallam & Gaunt, 2012) who constantly challenged or validated my thinking on collaborative learning and helped me hone my thoughts on how to study it. I also sought input from another colleague in relation to reviewing a draft of this study for the purposes of establishing whether the findings in the study were credible. This is discussed further below.

- “negative case analysis” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251)—The idea of presenting the challenges of participation in addition to the value was born out of my own critical self-reflection and a recognition that collaborative learning for music practice will not suit everyone. These challenges have also been included to counter the fact that students who withdrew from the courses were excluded from this study—they may have been a useful source of information on the challenges of collaborative learning, if complete data were available.⁴⁴ Even for those for whom collaborative learning is suitable, participation is not without its challenges and I include myself as teacher in this category. As discussed previously in this chapter, the intention is to present a balanced view, not an overly idealised depiction of collaborative learning in this context.
- “clarifying researcher bias” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251)—The inclusion of my background story in this study is an attempt to provide the reader with the perspective through which I have approached and

⁴⁴ This issue is discussed further in Chapter 9 regarding directions for future research.

designed this research. I aim for transparency in relation to my own subjectivity and have admitted to bias which I have attempted to manage.

- “member checking” (Creswell, 2013, p. 252)—This is a critical technique in establishing research credibility (Creswell, 2013). I explained above the ways in which the stories for Chapter 7 were written in collaboration with participants and the final versions validated. When students were provided with final versions, their comments validated the credibility of the accounts. Examples of the comments on the collective story of the learning community included “this is really accurate” (Hope), “It's really good and really does describe what we did in class” (Tamika) and “I honestly think that what you have written here is a perfect, genuine summary of last year. I agree with every single thing stated” (Maddie). I also sought the assistance of my co-teacher from semester one to read a draft of the entire study and assess the conclusions as credible or not. The co-teacher concluded that the essence of participants’ experiences had been captured (O’Leary, 2004).
- “rich, thick description” (Creswell, 2013, p. 252)—Providing a detailed account for readers enables them to consider whether the findings might be transferable to other contexts. The primary aim of applying the framework to a learning community is to produce a rich and complex depiction of value creation. In addition to this depiction, this study provides a detailed analysis—supported with evidence in students’ own words—about the ways in which

participation in the learning community built agency. This strategy is connected with the criteria discussed further below for narrative inquiry. The study aims to provide sufficient detail to give the reader a strong sense of what occurred and how participants experienced it, but also to enable the reader to view the component parts of the study in a more holistic fashion, in order to consider the transferability or applicability of the results to other similar contexts.

- “external audit” (Creswell, 2013, p. 253)—The submission of this study for examination acts as an external audit of the work.

I have applied Creswell’s (2013) strategies to support the validity and credibility of this study. I will now suggest some additional specific criteria for assessing narrative inquiry.

4.3.2 Further criteria for narrative analysis

Polkinghorne (1995) suggests that analysis of narrative can be assessed by validation as outlined above and narrative analysis by its trustworthiness. This study uses both analysis of narrative and narrative analysis. In relation to narrative analysis, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) note that narrative relies on criteria other than validity, reliability and generalizability. Connelly and Clandinin suggest one option for formulating applicable criteria is for researchers themselves to “search for, and defend, the criteria that best apply” (p. 7). The following section outlines and defends the criteria I have identified for this study. These criteria relate particularly to the narrative inquiry outlined in Chapter 7 and to the overarching narrative of this study.

In reviewing the literature, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) canvass a range of options to apply to narrative research, including apparenity, verisimilitude and transferability. Connelly and Clandinin suggest that good narrative research provides a sense simultaneously of the detail and the whole. Connelly and Clandinin discuss the idea of the narrative as an invitation to participate—inviting other researchers to look into the work and see what the researcher saw. This perspective suggests that ideas within narrative research be considered and pondered, not presented as truth. The test available to the reader of such inquiry is therefore to ask a question such as “What do you make of it for your teaching (or other) situation?” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 8).

The hallmarks of invitational narrative are that the reader connects to the work by recognising particulars, imagining scenes in which those particulars occur and reconstructing them from remembered associations with similar particulars. The particular is designed to trigger emotion and the general provides the reader with possible scenarios of transferability. Further useful criteria for invitational narrative include economy, selectivity, familiarity, adequacy or plausibility. The story should successfully “stand between the general and the particular” and function as an argument “in which we learn something essentially human by understanding an actual life or community as lived” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 8).

Barrett and Stauffer (2009c) argue that the best narrative inquiry in music education seeks to “reverberate and resonate in and through the communities it serves” (p. 20). Excellent narrative work is “resonant work”

which “seeks communication beyond the immediate or surface meanings, and reverberation past the present moment” (p. 20). For work to be resonant it must be “respectful, responsible, rigorous and resilient” (p. 20)— respectful towards the research participants through prolonged engagement and the fostering of trust; responsible to the public good, the research participants, to myself as researcher and to my professional community; rigorous, enabling the reader to see and hear what they would have missed otherwise; and resilient by speaking to multiple audiences and being open to multiple interpretations (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009c). Resonant and resilient narrative work “builds autonomy, independence, and resolve so that readers and those who participate in the inquiry are moved to take on resonant work themselves” (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009c, p. 26).

4.3.3 Summary of credibility framework

I have applied Creswell’s (2013) strategies for ensuring the validity of this study. I also invite the reader to consider the overall narrative of this study and its component parts and reflect upon implications for their own practice or similar contexts. The intention is for the work to be economical yet adequately detailed to provide a rich description of participants’ experiences. The study is designed to be persuasive by providing evidence of participants’ experiences and by considering alternative interpretations. This study aims to be resonant work which reverberates and resonates for the reader and is respectful, responsible, rigorous and resilient (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009c).

4.4 Chapter summary

This chapter described the research design for this study, starting with the formulation of the participant pool and ethical considerations. I provided the rationale for relying on multiple data sources and detailed how data were collected, collated and analysed. I discussed how students' essays and journals were analysed thematically to ascertain the ways in which their participation built agency. This thematic analysis is presented in Chapter 5. The focus then turned to my application of Wenger et al.'s (2011) conceptual framework for promoting and assessing value in networks and communities. I described how short answer questionnaires based on the framework were used to identify indicators of value. This process involved a combination of analysis of narrative and narrative analysis. These findings are presented in Chapter 6. I then outlined the process of narrative analysis of students' essays and journals together with short answer questionnaires and the teacher/researcher diary to write value creation stories which are told Chapter 7. I noted that a value creation matrix is the result of combining indicators of value and value creation stories (Wenger et al., 2011). Two final value creation matrices—one for students and one for me as teacher—are presented and discussed in Chapter 8.

Finally, I proposed a framework within which the findings can be assessed as credible and valid. I detailed how Creswell's (2013) strategies for ensuring validity were applied in this study and then, based on specific criteria for assessing narrative inquiry, I issued an invitation to the reader to reflect upon the ways in which the results and conclusions of this study might have transferable applications or resonate with their own practice.

The following chapter presents the results of the thematic analysis of students' essays and journals, which was conducted to establish the ways in which collaborative learning built individual and collective agency.

Chapter 5. Individual and Collective Agency

This study aims to better understand the complexities of collaborative learning by discovering participants' experiences of collaborative learning for music practice during 2014 at USQ. As previously discussed, in order to tease out the complexities inherent in such a learning environment, I have used theoretical tools through which to view participants' experiences. This chapter presents the findings of the analysis of student narratives contained in their essays and journals, as viewed through Karlsen's (2011) musical agency lens. Karlsen formulated the lens to assist researchers to investigate "music education from the angle of the learner's experience" (p. 107).⁴⁵

Thematic analysis—a form of paradigmatic narrative analysis which searches for commonalities across the data set—was used to "develop general knowledge about a collection of stories" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 15). Examples from students' reflections are included in this chapter as they appear in their own work, with minimal corrections. Corrections were made where errors in spelling or grammar detracted considerably from readability. Pseudonyms were used for each student. Polkinghorne (1995) notes that the type of knowledge generated from paradigmatic narrative analysis is abstract and can underplay the unique aspects of individual stories. It is hoped that the quotes from reflections will give the reader some sense of the individual journeys of the students. A select number of these stories will be told in Chapter 7 to complement the analysis presented here.

⁴⁵ The lens was previously discussed in detail in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.3 "Musical agency".

5.1 Overview

The method for this aspect of the study is fully detailed in Chapter 4, Section 4.2.2 “Student essays and journals”. In brief, students were required to complete reflective essays and journals as part of their assessment for MUI1001 and MUI1002. These essays and journals form the data relied upon to answer the following research question:

How did participation in collaborative learning for music practice build students’ individual and collective agency?

Data were collated and copied into NVIVO for analysis. The dataset was read completely five times, including the familiarisation process. The coding scheme for the analysis was developed inductively through a process of complete coding (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Codes were developed based on features of the data relevant to students’ experience and evidence gathered for each code. As discussed in the Introduction, whilst separate tutorials were held for each instrument grouping, data relating to these classes were excluded from analysis.

5.2 Introduction to themes

Three main themes were constructed (Braun & Clarke, 2013) from the data, with each theme containing a number of sub-themes. I have chosen a direct quotation from the data to represent each theme. The themes move progressively from dealing with the individual to the collective dimension of musical agency (see Table 4).

Table 4—Themes and their relationship to Karlsen's (2011) lens

Primary themes	Sub-themes	Agency
How students learned: “I have learnt so much, though not just from my lecturers”—Gemma.	*Peer-to-peer learning and teaching: *Learning from differences *Building relationships *Learning from negative experiences	Individual
What students learned: “I've worked so long by myself that I didn't notice half of my issues I had”—Shane	*Developing music-related skills *Using limitations creatively *Learning the basics *The importance of personal practice *Putting theory into practice *Communication skills *Self-identity, transformation	Individual
Shared focus: “We all have one focus which binds us into a single team: the desire to make music”—Jack	*Negotiating shared practices *Experiencing a sense of joint enterprise *Feeling a collective sense of pride/achievement	Collective

5.3 Individual agency

Throughout the discussion of the themes from the student reflective data, I refer to aspects of Karlsen's (2011) lens (Figure 2, discussed in Chapter 2). Where I apply aspects of the lens, I have placed the phrase in italics e.g. *empowerment*, *self-regulation*.

5.3.1 How students learned

This theme focuses on students' perceptions of how they learned. Students' reflections revealed that they learned primarily through interactions with each other. Students learned through experiencing and negotiating each other's differences and through the course of the year, built relationships which became valuable learning resources. A number of students were also able to learn from negative interactions with each other.

Learning from peer heterogeneity. According to Karlsen (2011) meaningful music education connects to and unites differences amongst students' musical experiences. Students' reflections revealed that they learned primarily from each other, despite and because of each other's differences. These differences came in many guises—levels of playing experience and traditional music literacy; skills on a variety of instruments/voice; varying levels of “life experience”; personality differences; differences in musical taste and knowledge of repertoires or traditions; and differences in levels of commitment to the courses. Rather than being an impediment to learning, it is in fact this heterogeneity which students experienced as being one of the key sources of learning in the collaborative environment. This finding accords with one of the main benefits of peer-to-peer learning noted in the literature, namely learning from “the cognitive conflict that arises from realizing the others' perspectives differ from one's own” (Micari & Pazos, 2014, p. 250). Jack was able to identify the value of these differences to his learning: “now I see the importance of mixing with all different people with different skills, because I will never know what wonderful things I will learn.”

Social comparison. Whilst learning in this study is viewed as a fundamentally social act, this interaction with “the other” is not always necessarily positive, particularly in the formative stages of relationships between peers. Some students compared themselves unfavourably with their peers. This tendency towards comparison is labelled “social comparison concern” and was first articulated by Festinger (1954). Comparison can be upwards—“I'm not good enough”—or downwards—“I'm better than you”.

Whilst some students, particularly in the first semester reflections, mentioned feeling challenged or intimidated to begin with, this feeling was short-lived and adopting a growth mindset (Dweck, 2008)—something we discussed explicitly in classes—helped them to view these differences in ability constructively. The students also identified their fellow group members as being a source of support in helping them overcome their concerns.

Gemma was particularly affected by comparing herself to others but she found comfort in the members of her group: “I have found it hard to keep up with the others in the group. They are all so talented and I found it personally hard to keep up though my group members were great at motivating me and making me feel better.” This student was quite insecure to varying degrees throughout the year, but by the time she wrote her semester two reflection, she had developed strategies to cope with her tendency to compare herself with others:

I have been in two groups this semester and I have been paired with an amazing, mind-blowing singer each time. To begin with I was really down on myself. “Why can’t I sing like that?” But I’ve learnt by meeting the people in my class and meeting Mel that every voice is different. Yes these girls have a killer head voice but my chest voice is just as good. I have a powerful chest voice and I need to be happy with what I have and work on what I don’t have.

Maddie had a similar experience and was able to use a growth mindset and the support of her group to help her move beyond her own self-imposed

limitations:

One thing that stood out to me from the classes that helped me prepare for my performance was the change of mindset. I used to put myself down a lot and when seeing others perform I would have doubts about myself but after hearing about it first hand, it made me realise that everyone is unique and everyone is different. With this realisation, instead of being filled with jealousy, I was inspired to be just as good and make more of an effort to get the results that I wanted.

Cate was able to use social comparison to her advantage quite early in her learning journey. Cate commented in semester one that she realised she was effectively learning through osmosis by working with others more skilled than her: “As we rehearsed over the course of the semester, I was unconsciously learning new information and skills from my fellow ‘ensemblists’ who knew how to read music and charts better than I did.”

Shane wrote that he felt he was “not up to par with many of the musicians in the course” but reflected on the progress he had made by engaging constructively with these differences:

I felt extremely challenged by this group, because I knew they were far more experienced musicians. And I wasn't growing at first, I was going against the grain. It was a miserable time indeed, until I finally let go of my ego. Once I was comfortable admitting that my peers were better musicians, that's when I grew. And I grew very fast. I started to really pay attention to everything everyone was saying and was no longer afraid to ask the stupid questions . . . I feel so very

fortunate that I was accepted into the course. I feel as though I am not up to par with many of the musicians in the course. And that is probably the best environment for me to be in.

These instances of social comparison provide useful examples of affected students' ability to use the group environment constructively for their own learning purposes. Cate took a pragmatic approach and Shane, Maddie and Gemma were able to resolve the conflict they felt due to comparing themselves with others by applying their understanding of mindset and looking to their ensembles for support. This process led them to possess a deeper understanding of their own capabilities and how they might best improve their skills (Micari & Pazos, 2014).

Viewed through Karlsen's (2011) lens, these students, by developing music-related skills in a collaborative setting, were in fact able to enhance their capacity to act, despite feeling initially intimidated or inadequate. For all these students, their participation developed their *ability to access learning experiences* through constructively reframing their habitual negative responses to the abilities of others. Viewed through Karlsen's lens, initially engaging in social comparison lead to surprising insights for these students within their collaborative learning, thereby enhancing their capacity to act within music-related settings.

Building relationships. As the year progressed, relationships developed and students noticed that these relationships became an important aspect of their learning. The social aspect of the courses contributed towards students' enjoyment and engagement. Hope valued this social aspect of

collaboration:

The value for me personally of working in small groups was the intimacy we shared with each other. This semester especially I've come to know everyone better and on a more personal level. Our group even had a small birthday party for John and it created a great family-like atmosphere. It was great to find out the interests of everyone in my group and connect with them.

John himself also remarked on the difference having time to build relationships made to his own sense of ease and interest in the class:

It's been great to work in small groups. I felt like, at the start of the year, if I had had to work with the whole class as one big group, that would've been slightly daunting for me to say the least. I much preferred the system of working in small groups, since it's of my opinion that you can work better with people you know well. Getting to know each person's strengths and how much they've been in music in the past was also very interesting for me personally, to see why they are at university and what they are hoping to get out of it.

Gemma felt that the group size encouraged relationship building and made open communication easier: "...such small groups made a stronger friendship bond which was very helpful. This way we were able to be more open and offer more constructive criticism because we weren't strangers or even acquaintances." Most students commented that they made good friends through their collaborations. Jack observed:

I have made a dramatic improvement in my professionalism this semester through working with a group. I have been inspired by other group members and feel that I have made a difference in their progress as musicians. I have made connections and new valuable friendships which may even pay off professionally in the end.

Jack felt that through his relationships with group members he was able to influence their progress as musicians.

Within these relationships, many students identified their peers as a source of inspiration and/or motivation. John was motivated by Shane's work ethic when grouped with him in semester one, which helped him stay focussed on his goals. John noted that Shane's influence extended into semester two, even when John and Shane were in different groups. Mark also identified Shane as "an inspiring example of professionalism in any setting". Mark reflected that his learning was also influenced by Jack, who set a "high benchmark with his playing". Mark was very impressed by Jack's ability to communicate on a deeper level with the audience through infusing his playing with emotion and noticed that this was because of the work Jack did "behind the scenes" in personal practice. Through thinking and reflecting on Jack's "method" Mark was able to *access learning experiences* that would otherwise not be available to him. Mark was able to identify Jack's method as one which he could implement himself to improve his connection with the audience. Shane also inspired Jack. Shane's influence on Jack extended beyond the walls of the practice room into other musical endeavours such as learning to play guitar and song writing:

Not only has working a group taught me group skills, but by working with other people I have been able to pick up new skills and have gained a lot of inspiration. Working with Shane in particular I have learned a lot of valuable skills. As I have noted in my Journal from the 26th of November, Shane's guitar and compositional skills have rubbed off on me in regards to my guitar and song writing skills. I have noticed an incredible improvement in my song writing since working with and examining him. I have learned to experiment with different tunings and I have started using percussive guitar. I have been exposed to new works wherein I am trying to emulate their works. We can bounce music and ideas for new compositions off each other. I also feel that I have aided in influencing Shane's instrumental compositions. He was often watching me closely, examining how I structured and created my compositions and he looked rather fascinated. He asked questions about my work to help him in his. Shane would often praise my work ethics and skill on piano to other people and I feel I have definitely made a valuable connection.

This particular relationship between Shane and Jack developed Jack's agency in a number of ways. The influence of Shane on Jack helped Jack develop *music-related skills* beyond his primary instrument into domains, leading to a sense of *empowerment*. Jack experienced *shifts in his identity* as a musician because of his interaction with Shane. Again, because of Jack's conscious connection with Shane, he was able to *access learning experiences* not previously available to him. Jack was heavily influenced and inspired by his relationship with Shane.

Reframing negative experiences with peers. The majority of students were able to constructively re-align what were, in some cases, quite challenging interactions with peers. Perhaps the most challenging was the situation Jane faced in semester two, which involved a severe personality clash between the other two members of her group. Jane learned the importance of being a good collaborator and what that entails:

I've learnt a lot about how to talk to difficult people and the appropriate way for people to communicate in these circumstances. I've also learnt patience. Lots of patience. Being left sitting in a rehearsal room after already having been in there for hours whilst one member of your ensemble has run out crying thanks to the other one screaming and leaving has taught me a few lessons. I've learnt that it's okay to approach an outsider for help and it doesn't mean that I've failed to maintain the group and to keep peace but if the issue had been addressed sooner we may have avoided this. I've learnt that I shouldn't be biased toward a friend in a professional situation and I should have recognised the issue sooner and the risks that were in play.

Put simply, Jane was able to view these stressful experiences as learning experiences. Through her interactions with her peers, Jane increased her *ability to access learning experiences* and her sense of *empowerment*. Shane also discussed at length dealing with a challenging personality in his group. Shane reflected upon his initial reactions to this challenge—public anger and frustration—and realised that it would have been better handled by

trying to speak with the person in question in private. Though challenging and at times very stressful, interactions with peers enabled both Shane and Jane to *access learning experiences* and increase their sense of individual agency.

Theme summary—how students learned. Students' experienced peer-to-peer learning and teaching as the single most important way in which they learned in the collaborative setting. From initially negotiating differences through upwards social comparison, to becoming adept at recognising and leveraging differences, students were able to learn from the cognitive conflict and both positive and negative experiences which arose from being placed in heterogeneous groups. When viewing these experiences through the individual dimension of Karlsen's (2011) lens, these experiences demonstrate students' increased agency. The following discussion turns from how students perceived they learned, to what they felt they learned in the collaborative setting.

5.3.2 What students learned

This theme encapsulates what students perceived they learned. This study views the acquisition of new skills, both musical and otherwise, from the students' perspective. I have not conducted any moderation of these skills or any judgment as to their proficiency, as this is not relevant to the aim of this study. Rather, the view adopted here is that the value of educational experience is that which is perceived as valuable by the learner (see also Cajander et al., 2012). The rationale for this approach was discussed in Chapter 3. I will first discuss those areas where students'

experienced *developing music-related skills*. I will then demonstrate that through developing music-related skills, many students achieved non-musical learning outcomes relating to communication, self-regulation, *self-identity* and personal *transformation*.

Developing music-related skills. Students' reflections revealed that they learned about arranging music and aesthetics, the rudiments of music, the importance of personal practice and the relevance of theory to practice.

Arranging music and ensemble effectiveness. The student ensembles were somewhat unconventional—most did not have a full rhythm section, each group usually had a number of singers and the class had only one drummer and no bass player. Many students were able to use these limitations to explore creative solutions to arranging and playing. Cate, Jane, Hope and John all noted how these limitations sparked their creativity. During semester two, Cate's group was asked to play a 1980s cover at a local radio station. When the group realised that space would be limited at the station, they decided to get Hope to play the cello instead of the piano. This resulted in a unique interpretation of Pat Benatar's "We Belong" complete with cello ostinato. This experience gave Cate confidence in her abilities to use instrumentation innovatively and wisely. Cate also remarked that when someone didn't show up for a rehearsal this was "dealt with by developing contingency plans including changes to orchestration and arrangement." John described some challenges he experienced due to limitations on instruments, but also how they were overcome in order to achieve the group's desired effect:

A slight challenge for our group at times was to achieve a full sound, or achieve the desired effect for each song. With two of the members being vocalists, it was a challenge, but fun, to find what combinations of sound that we could find to achieve the feeling we were after. For example, even though I consider myself most proficient on the alto sax, for two of our pieces I was playing a 'Rockbox', which was best for the overall feel of the songs that I played it in and also really fun at the same time.

Throughout, John displayed a willingness to work within the limitations to ensure that a satisfactory musical outcome was achieved. As a result, John was able to *access learning experiences* like playing percussion, which would not otherwise have been available to him.

Given the nature of the ensembles, some students realised that music need not be overly complex to be good. Hope, Cate, Jane, and Shane all remarked on this. These students were able to refine their own aesthetic. Shane reflected upon this breakthrough in the refinement of his own concept of both ensemble and solo work:

I'll just play one note if that's what the song needs, that's something I've come to learn about ensemble work. I look back at myself and realise how much pressure I put on myself to deliver something so interesting and busy as a solo act. Ensemble work doesn't require it and neither does the solo act for that matter!

Hope commented:

A thing that I have been trying to communicate across to the group (along with Cate) is that our pieces don't have to be complex and “awesome”, they can be simple and sweet and make as many feet tap as a more complex arrangement of a song would. I think that this has also helped our group because then we can focus more on getting everything right instead of trying to make one piece a million times greater and fantastic than the last.

Hope noted that the limitations on instrumentation led to creative problem solving: “you can't just get a string orchestra in for this song and a rhythm section for another, you've really got to problem solve and think of new and different ways of being able to do things.” Jane had a similar experience:

Something I've really learnt from this is that simple can be best. I took on a lot in all the songs and I tried to add too much because I had so many plans and so much that I'd wanted to do. I had to learn to be realistic and, not lower, but change my expectations for a song.

The limitations on instrumentation inspired these students to find creative solutions to problems and also to a deeper understanding of musical aesthetics. Developing these *music-related skills* built students' agency.

Learning the rudiments of music. A number of students experienced breakthroughs relating to rudimentary musical skills. Shane experienced significant improvement in his timing, primarily through working with John in semester two:

I feel as though I gained a very great deal from this experience, I've worked so long by myself that I didn't notice half of my issues I had. My biggest one is timing, which I've now invested in a drum machine, which has helped greatly. John really helped me with my timing. Just working with him because his timing was so tight, I felt safe, that I could always rely on him to keep the beat and I could just drop back in on the beat and know it was right.

Jane also made an important discovery through working through rhythmic issues with her group to achieve “groove”:

Working in small groups develops listening skills to a much greater extent than working in bigger ensembles. In order to get a tight and together sound you need to be able to listen and adapt to the other people who are playing . . . That's not something I'd consciously done before but it made a world of difference. And the more I thought about it, the more I realised in the few occasions I had played keys with my old school Jazz Band, [the teacher] had told just the rhythm section to play on a lot of occasions. Not to fix things, but to get the rhythm down; I hadn't really known that's what was happening.

In addition to perceived improvements in time and rhythm, Maddie, Jane and Shane experienced improved listening skills. Shane reflected: “I learned so much from working with Maddie, she taught me more about listening than I have learned since I picked up the guitar.” Maddie learned to blend better with other vocalists, as did Cate. Tamika, Gemma and Maddie experienced improvement in their singing. For Jack, the acquisition of

rudimentary skills resonated deeply with him as a learner, merely because these skills were things he did not have previously:

I was given the role of the keyboard and all I had to do was hold simple chords. However this was not a skill I could have been counted on to have before I started this course. I would not have been able to follow what was going on, to figure out what extra things I needed to do in a moment's notice, how to listen for what was going on so intently or even have read and understood the chart or how to read it. Now, I could do all of those things instantly and although it is a rudimentary thing and really any musician should be able to do it, I was still very happy with myself for this. That is certainly not the only skill I have learned this semester but it is a fundamental one nonetheless.

Jack felt a great sense of accomplishment in being able to play in this manner. Viewed through Karlsen's (2011) lens, Jack, Shane, Maddie and Gemma *shaped self-identity through developing music-related skills*. The acquisition of these skills meant that these students' views of themselves changed—whereas previously they saw themselves as incapable, they were now capable and more able to function musically within a collaborative setting.

The importance of personal practice. Almost every student learned lessons about the importance and relevance of personal practice. As Maddie noted about her group's rehearsals: “In these rehearsals it really shows how much work each person has put in so that when we come together, it all fits

together nicely.” For Jack this was directly connected to working with others and the responsibility he felt towards his group:

I have learned that I am much more focused when there is pressure placed on me to perform. Throughout the semester I have been made to work in many situations where it is no longer just myself that will suffer if I am caught procrastinating too much. I perform much better when others are depending and working with me.

Cate had a similar view: “I enjoyed the healthy pressure of expectation. I was required to have practised my parts in order to make the next rehearsal more beneficial or effective.” Jane commented: “One thing worth mentioning was how much I learnt about individual practice and how it can really make or break a rehearsal. I found that a lot of time was wasted in rehearsals where someone was just figuring out a part.” John had one member of his group reinforce to him how important it was to properly prepare for group rehearsals:

I had some small barriers after the mid-semester holidays. It was mainly to do with me not practising enough on the songs that the group were playing for the performance, but because I was spending too much time making my own tracks and neglecting practice . . . This is something that I need to make sure I do more; to be making sure I’m ready for the group’s rehearsals first before working on my other tracks or productions.

On the individual dimension, these experiences demonstrate students

acquiring *self-regulation* skills, which in turn leads to improved *performance*. Virkkula's study (2015) found similar results. In that study, students in jazz and pop groups felt motivated to practice and do their best, because they understood that others depended on their contributions. Similarly here, students' realisations seemed in most cases to be linked to a burgeoning sense of *collective identity* in that the students became aware that they had to take responsibility for the music both individually and as a group. The collective dimension of musical agency will be discussed later in this chapter.

The relevance of theory to practice. For a number of students, the collaborative setting brought into stark relief the relevance of theory to practice and provided the opportunity for direct and immediate application of theoretical concepts. Cate, Tamika, Jack, Mark and Shane all identified the collaborative setting as an environment which tested their ability to communicate with fellow musicians using a common musical language. This was a particularly important aspect of learning for Cate, who entered the program with no traditional musical literacy skills. During semester one she realised "how important it is for me to develop my music skills and theory so that I can communicate an idea more effectively." By semester two, she had experienced significant breakthroughs:

Well! Have I blown myself away or what!? Last night I just got in and wrote a score for an instrumental treatment of Nirvana's 'Smells Like Teen Spirit'. AND . . . today in ensemble rehearsal - we played it and it worked! THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I HAVE COMMUNICATED A MUSICAL IDEA TO FELLOW MUSICIANS USING MUSICAL

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NOTATION. I am swingin' on a star!

Cate's experience was echoed by Mark: "I have grown musically this year by tackling my dread of theory and sowing the seeds that in the future will see me utilise music in its theoretical forms to creative end." For Cate and Mark the collaborative environment provided *access to learning experiences* regarding the connection between theory and practice. These students experienced *shifts in identity* because of their newfound ability to communicate using musical notation.

As Karlsen (2011) notes, when music is viewed as a means through which students constitute themselves as agents through engaging in consistent, music-related conduct, "it enables the possibility for a wider view of such conduct than is usually found within the field of music education" (p. 117). According to Karlsen, acquiring music-related skills can act as a springboard to achieving non-musical learning outcomes. The following sections discuss the non-musical learning outcomes students' achieved when developing music-related skills through collaborative learning.

Improved communication skills. Almost every student reflected upon communication and the ways in which the collaborative setting facilitated growth and learning in this area. For some students, speaking up or voicing opinions on musical or non-musical matters was quite a challenge. Jack, for example, had rarely worked with other musicians prior to USQ. Initially for him, speaking up was difficult, however by semester two, he felt more empowered to voice opinions:

I made some huge leaps in terms of my conduct in group work this semester. I could speak my mind and opinions more often and more comfortably. I felt invited to offer my own opinions and feedback on situations . . . I am more comfortable working with other people and have learned important communication skills so as to communicate effectively with other musicians.

Maddie experienced a different kind of breakthrough in her ability to communicate. She had been experiencing some issues with Hope, who, like Maddie, was a natural leader. When their opinions differed, Maddie needed to learn how to communicate in a way that was constructive and respectful. Jack too had to find “new ways of communicating with people . . . a skill that is quite necessary for the functionality of the group”. Over time, Tamika felt confident to speak up when there were clashes within the group. Her group came up with a novel way to deal with communication issues: “[W]e had to go around the circle and listen to everyone speak without interrupting them and take on any criticisms or ideas equally.” For naturally shy personalities such as John, the group setting provided insight into ways in which he might be more assertive in the future:

In hindsight, there are a few ways that I feel that I could improve my professional conduct within group work projects. I need to be more open about my own ideas and give more feedback, instead of just letting the rest of the group decide what’s going on for themselves. During this semester, I feel like because I was quieter than the rest of the group, that I just let them decide the direction that they were

taking each and every song . . . In future, I need to speak up, voice my opinions in a reasonable manner in order to help the group progress and to achieve the best end product possible.

As Karlsen (2011) notes, “Music may even be understood as a device for the generation of future identity and action” (p. 113). From this passage, John seems determined to be a more proactive advocate for his own needs in the future. He has a clearer sense of both his current and potential identity. From learning how to speak with professional respect (Maddie), to finding their own voice within the group (Jack, Tamika), or to simply becoming more aware of personal tendencies (John) these students experienced shifts in *self-identity* and *empowerment* through *developing music-related skills* in the collaborative setting.

Personal transformation. As a result of their participation, many students experienced shifts in self-identity through heightened self-awareness. Some of these shifts were powerful enough to be described as transformative. As Wenger (1998) notes, the most personally transformative educational experiences are those which occur within communities of practice or through social participation. Many of the extracts above exhibit some level of *shaping self-identity*, *empowerment* and personal *transformation*. The following examples mention these aspects of musical agency specifically and in the cases of John and Mark, link this shaping of identity and transformation directly to the collaborative context.

John became more self-aware in that he realised that he doesn’t speak up for himself, but wants to in the future. He also gained a clearer direction

for the future:

Comparing myself now to how I was at the start of the year, I have a much more firm mindset in my goals and my attitude and this isn't just with music, it's with life in general. The music ensemble work has helped a lot with this.

Shane too gained a clearer sense of purpose as a result of working with his ensemble:

I also had a self realisation moment which made me very proud of where I am today. I didn't realise just how badly music wasn't encouraged in my early schooling years. And yet today I realised how much at home I felt jamming with the musicians in the group today. Although I felt musically inferior to some degree, I still felt really at home, at home with a bunch of people I barely know. It was a wonderful feeling.

Further on, Shane remarked:

I actually look at it as an advantage that I have. I have a fire in my belly to succeed in music because of my humble beginnings. I want it like I want air and I keep proving to myself, daily, how badly I want it too. It truly does seem that within every adversity, there lies the seed of an equal or greater opportunity.

Shane used his present-day musical experiences to make sense of his past and to reinforce his view of himself as someone who is pursuing music

professionally:

I still have so much work to do and it seems the deeper I go down the rabbit hole the more I realise I don't actually know. And the more I don't know strangely the more comfortable I feel around all musicians, from all backgrounds and all influences.

Mark also experienced musical and personal transformation as a result of his participation: “Of key significance within such a venture is that any confounding personal inadequacies will in time stand out in stark relief. However such revelations are available as a road to personal growth and are therefore a blessing.” In a later reflection he noted:

The group pushed me so far out of my comfort zone in ways that are impossible to fully articulate. Clearly an experience not without its bigger picture benefits however in that personal and musical weaknesses have been exposed. At this point in my development as a musician the small ensemble’s value lies in its role as a primary vehicle for transformation. The ensemble environment very much helps to foster that creative, intellectual and personal metamorphosis from a talented instrumentalist into an accomplished professional musician.

Maddie reflected that “This year has already changed my life and I am so thankful for the people who have helped me to achieve what I have and become the person I am now (more) comfortable with.” These students’ experiences are lived examples of a social theory of learning in action, in

that they exhibit the transformative power of learning within a social or collaborative context.

Theme summary—what students learned. Students identified the limitations of small group work, particularly in terms of instrumentation, as a vehicle to improve problem-solving skills and to spark creativity. A number of students identified that they had improved specific music-related skills such as timing, listening, vocal ability, chord construction and ensemble playing. Almost every student realised the importance and relevance of personal practice to their group work and their development as a musician. A number of students identified the collaborative setting as useful for putting theory into practice which helped emphasise the importance, relevance and application of theoretical concepts as a means to an end, namely making better music. Many students felt an increased capacity to communicate both with their peers and an increased awareness of their own tendencies in this department. A number of students felt that they had shaped their identities as both musicians and people—even experienced transformation—as a result of their participation. Viewed through Karlsen’s (2011) lens, students’ experiences evidence increased individual agency through their participation in learning music collaboratively.

5.4 Collective agency

In addition to the individual dimension of agency, Karlsen’s (2011) lens incorporates a collective dimension. The collective dimension turns the focus from concerns about how individuals use music to negotiate their

position in the world towards a “collective musical use” or “collective musical action” (p. 115). Karlsen identifies five categories of collective musical agency: “using music for regulating and structuring social encounters; coordinating bodily action; affirming and exploring collective identity; ‘knowing the world’; and establishing a basis for collaborative musical action” (p. 115). Karlsen identifies, amongst other things, playing music in a group as the strongest way to establish and maintain collaborative musical action. Whilst this may seem self-evident, it reiterates the point made previously that not all group work is necessarily collaborative (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b; Ingleton et al., 2000). In order to develop collective agency through collaboration, playing music in a group must provide participants with the opportunity to work on both mutually agreed goals with a sense of direction or purpose (Karlsen, 2011).

5.4.1 Establishing a basis for collective musical action

An important part of the students’ work was negotiating “collectively-agreed musical goals” (Karlsen, 2011, p. 117) in order to establish a basis for collective musical action. Given that collaboration was new for a number of students, it is not surprising that some of these students struggled with the process of negotiating shared goals and with balancing their own musical interests and ideas with those of the group. One of Maddie’s groups had to problem solve during rehearsals, as there were a number of disagreements about repertoire and instrumentation. Maddie wrote that:

John told us that he really wanted to play piano in this song or do something with his instrument but we agreed that it sounded better

with a more simple sound. I felt a bit sorry for him because he wasn't able to use his instrument in any of the songs! I tried to suggest it but we couldn't find anything that worked.

John was initially unhappy with this state of affairs, however, he eventually realised that it was because of his own absence from rehearsals and not speaking up sooner that the group made decisions about instrumentation which he had to accept. Having never worked with others before, Jack had a similar experience to John in that he realised that his own desires and those of the group did not always coincide:

It was very hard to separate my own desires for the music from the rest of the groups, because I was used to making my own decisions about the music without anyone's disapproval. To suddenly come into an environment where that was no longer allowed was actually daunting and adjusting was very difficult.

Both Jack and John successfully identified this issue for themselves and also negotiated their way through it with their groups. Both students subjugated their own musical desires in order to explore their group's collective musical identity. John was able to identify his own progress:

I had to learn to, at times, step back when one of my ideas didn't work and, instead of thinking of what would work best for my own personal talent or strengths, I had to keep in mind at all times what would work best for the group as a whole. It was important for me to be respectful at all times of each person's ideas, even if I didn't quite agree with

them.

Jack and John learned that the group itself was an entity; that all members needed to be present for effective rehearsals and decision-making; that members' individual contributions must first and foremost serve the music; and that for the group to be effective, consensus needed to be reached on what the group was trying to achieve.

Whilst some students found this negotiation new and difficult, others enjoyed the process and experienced it as building a sense of teamwork and group identity. Maddie noted that her group was solving problems and making decisions jointly:

I was quite impressed by the maturity of selecting, as others obviously had higher preferences for certain songs than others. That made me very comfortable knowing that the group has the maturity to problem solve and work towards what's best for the group, rather than individuals . . .

Hope also enjoyed the negotiation process:

I think that it's really cool to be in a group where everyone knows their own part before coming to rehearsal and we all seem to be getting along really well and also bouncing ideas off each other. I don't feel like there is one person doing more work than the other, I feel like we all know that we're here to work and co-operate as a group and that is what we are doing and I LOVE IT!

Maddie and Hope experienced the negotiation process positively and Maddie was able to interpret this ability to negotiate as *establishing a basis for collaborative musical action*.

5.4.2 Exploring and affirming collective identity

Karlsen (2011) draws on the work of Christopher Small in explaining the ways in which music can be used to both explore and affirm group identity. In particular, music as ritual is an important vehicle for establishing group identity in a number of ways:

. . . rituals are used both as an act of affirmation of community (“This is who we are”), as an act of exploration (to try on identities to see who we think we are), and as an act of celebration (to rejoice in the knowledge of an identity not only possessed but also shared with others). (Small, 1998, Interlude 2, para. 6)

The simple act of rehearsing with one’s group can be viewed as a type of ritual, where certain shared practices are negotiated and embedded and repeated on a regular basis. Evidence of this negotiation is provided in the reflections discussed above. Public performances are also rituals, in which each participant has certain roles they must play. Twice, groups celebrated the birthdays of members, complete with party hats and cake. Small acknowledgements such as these helped students cohere as a group and form a sense of class identity. Rehearsals provided the opportunity for students to explore collective identity. The final performances acted as a rallying point around which students could publicly proclaim this identity both as groups and as a class. Finally, students experienced great pride and a

sense of achievement in the work of their groups and the class as a whole, allowing them to “rejoice in the knowledge of an identity not only possessed but also shared with others” (Small, 1998, Interlude 2, para. 6).

5.4.3 Knowing the world

Just as musical action on the individual level can be used as a vehicle for transforming one’s sense of self, it can be used to explore “what it means to interact socially in the world and to engage in meaningful relationships” (Karlsen, 2011, p. 117). Musical action can be used “to attend to and expand what it means ‘to be’ on the collective level” (Karlsen, 2011, p. 117).

For many of the students, this was their first opportunity to explore their place within a collective musical context. Maddie said that “working in a small ensemble at university was a completely different experience compared to anything that I have done with music”. Maddie, Tamika, Mark and Shane all reflected on how different group work was to their previous musical experiences. For Maddie, group work was “completely different”; for Tamika, it was a “bit of a change, but an enjoyable one”; for Mark, it pushed him “so far out of my comfort zone”; and Shane said that he had worked by himself for a long time, which resulted in him being blind to his own shortcomings as a musician. Jack had rarely played music with others before and found the transition from solo to group work challenging:

I never thought that working in a group would be so incredibly beneficial to me. For all of my life I had rarely worked in a group, preferring to go completely solo . . . However coming into this course

and having to work in a group really changed my perspective of what I wanted to do. I still love going solo and working on my own stuff, but working in a group has given me some fundamental skills that solo work would never have achieved. It was difficult to make the transition between solo and group work, however I feel more prepared for the future now as I see that working with others is an important part of the music career.

Despite his lack of experience playing music with others, the transition from solo performer to collaborator for Jack was ultimately a welcome and necessary one, which enabled him to achieve a basic level of musical proficiency. For these students, these experiences increased collective agency, through expanding the ways in which students *could know the world* through collective musical action.

5.4.4 Shared musical goals

At the end of each semester, students presented their group work in a public concert. Students reflected after the concerts that they felt they had achieved something collectively. This sense of collective achievement was felt at both the group and class level. Jack identified a sense of joint purpose within his group:

I have found my group for this semester incredibly engaging, filled with ingenuity and brilliance. I have enjoyed their company far more than my group last semester, as this group is far more focused on the work. They are more positive, harder working, less distractible and we all get along much better with each other. We all have one focus

which binds us into a single team: the desire to make music. This is an incredibly enjoyable group of people.

Jack reflected on the success of the semester two concert:

In comparison to our concert last semester, I think that we have done an incredible job. Even not comparing it to last semester, I think we did an incredible job. We were so much more prepared for this concert, even though it came up a week earlier. There was not a single song that was not up to performance standard. Since we have been working with each other for so long, there was a mutual understanding of how each other works and this mutual respect for each other. We worked together as peers and not just strangers.

Hope's group had five songs instead of four for the concert. In consultation with them, we decided to use their fifth song (ABBA's "Money, Money, Money") as a class song. Hope wrote that "after a discussion with Mel, we have decided to make Money Money Money an all class song! :) So it will be a finale for the concert, which is awwwwweesome!! So excited to do that!":

Next week is our concert (Wednesday 22nd) and I am so very excited for it, our class is also doing a finale piece together, our group was going to perform it, but then we changed our minds, so the class is going to do "Money Money Money" by ABBA and the reaction that most of the class has had to it has been so very exciting. I also decided to print out 16 copies of our lead sheet and lyrics, which turned out to

be very useful, however, I forgot to put in little simple things such as how long the intro was and when the modulation happened and what it modulated to, so I can definitely learn from that. Overall this week has been fantastically wonderful and I can't wait for our concert next week

As class time before the concert was limited, I left it to the students to rehearse as a class, which they did. In negotiating the running order for the concert, everyone agreed that “Money, Money, Money” should be the finale. As teacher, I was really proud of the students for getting this piece together under their own steam. They seemed highly motivated to make it work. Jane wrote that “The group number, Money Money Money, was awesome. Cate just made it totally hilarious and fun. It was fantastic!” More generally, Maddie noted that “The end of year concert was an absolute blast. I was amazed by the amount of support from other ensembles and the strong connection that my ensemble shared.”

The semester two concert was a defining moment for the groups and the class. It enabled students to announce publicly “This is who we are”, thus *establishing and affirming their collective identity*. They pulled together as a class to present a performance and at the last minute, a class song. In effect, they were publicly affirming the values they had developed throughout the year—the importance of professionalism, good communication, respecting and working with each other’s differences, formulating and working towards shared goals. They had gotten to know each other as a class and established a strong sense of community as a result.

This sense of community, shared identity and purpose is evident in students' reflections about their achievements. When reflecting upon what had been achieved throughout the year, students mostly referred to the achievements of the class as a whole, or other individual members rather than themselves. Jane reflected on the semester two concert:

I was super impressed with everyone in the end, they were all so entertaining and really threw themselves into it. The first group was so entertaining with Jack's awesome energy on the stage (even the nervous energy . . . !) and Gemma and Tamika really held our attention. Cate's group was just amazing, as to be expected. John and Hope are incredibly tight and just amazing musicians. I only wish I could've heard them a little more in the four-part sections. And you just can't help but love Cate. She's so comfortable on the stage and makes the audience feel the same. All in all everyone did so well and I can't believe how the standard has improved since last semester!

Tamika wrote that "it was great seeing everyone improve dramatically and enjoying themselves." John too was proud of the achievements of his peers:

Had the concert this week and it was awesome! The group was awesome in each song; Cate had a great stage presence which made it easier for all of us I think. I also got my mum to come along and she was suitably impressed I think! I'm really happy with each of the groups and their performance this semester and certainly for rising through each challenge.

Jack felt the standard of the class had improved dramatically from first semester and he felt a sense of pride in both class and individual achievements:

Our standard was higher this time and I feel we have set a bar. It was also a really encouraging thing to have so many people give such positive reviews about it. Especially that I have had second and third year students come up to me personally to tell me positive things about my personal performance.

These students felt a sense of *empowerment* on both the individual and collective level as a result of their participation in the concerts. Working towards these concerts gave the class a collective goal and helped to shape the collective identity of the groups and the class. As Karlsen (2011) notes in relation to her previous research on festival concerts, such performances can act as a vehicle for social groups to better understand themselves as groups through cultural activity. For the students in this study, these concerts were a means to “reinforce a sense of community” (p. 116) which in turn built agency on the collective dimension.

5.5 Chapter summary

Thematic analysis of students’ journals and essays revealed that participation in collaborative learning built students’ individual and collective agency. On the individual dimension, students learned through interaction with their peers. Students leveraged the heterogeneity amongst their peers as a learning resource. Peer-to-peer learning and teaching was so highly valued that the majority of students did not mention teachers as

playing a role in their learning in the collaborative context. Individual agency increased because developing music-related skills collaboratively provided students with access to valued and meaningful learning experiences via peer-to-peer interaction. In terms of what they learned, students' perceived learning outcomes traversed broad terrain, from rudimentary musical skills, the importance of personal practice and the relevance of theory to practice, to more personal outcomes such as improved communication, the shaping of self-identity and transformation.

On the collective dimension, students established a basis for collective musical action which in turn enabled them to affirm and explore a collective identity at the group and class level, building a strong sense of community. Students' sense of pride and achievement focussed on the class or other peers and the concert performances rather than on themselves as individuals. Some students became aware of balancing their own personal and musical interests with those of the group and others experienced knowing the world in new ways because of their collaborations.

The following two chapters report the findings of applying Wenger et al.'s (2011) framework for assessing and promoting value in communities and networks to the 2014 learning community. As will be seen, the value created by community participation complements the findings in this chapter which demonstrated that collaborative learning increased students' individual and collective agency. When viewed together, the findings on agency and value creation provide a detailed picture of the complexities of participants' experiences of collaborative learning.

Chapter 6. Value Indicators

The previous chapter reported that learning music practice collaboratively increased students' agency both individually and collectively. This chapter provides a summary of the findings from additional student data in the form of short answer questionnaires and other quantitative sources. These data were collected using Wenger et al.'s (2011) conceptual framework for promoting and assessing value in networks and communities. The framework outlines two complementary types of data for researchers to gather to assess value creation—value indicators and value creation stories. This chapter focuses on the findings relating to value indicators and Chapter 7 presents the value creation stories.

6.1 Overview

The framework and the ways in which it was applied in this study were discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.2.3 “Framework data”. Whilst I discussed the rationale for relying on multiple data sources in Chapter 4, Section 4.2 “Methods—data collection, collation and analysis”, some further comments in this regard are required to distinguish the role of student essay and journal data analysed in the previous chapter, from the data collected using the framework.

6.1.1 Value to whom?

The increased agency reported in Chapter 5 is primarily of value to student stakeholders. As Wenger et al. (2011) note, “The primary recipients of value in a community or a network are the participants themselves, both

individually and collectively. If they do not get value, they will not participate and the community/network will fall apart” (p. 15). In addition to the perspectives of student stakeholders and the value they receive from participation, the framework acknowledges that there are stakeholders other than community members who should be considered when assessing and promoting the value of a community. In this case, one of the major stakeholders is the university itself. Whilst it may be challenging to convince an institutional stakeholder of the value created by an enhanced sense of agency in students, the framework directly addresses the issue of value for such a stakeholder by gathering data which speak to institutional interests, such as organisational reputation and reframing criteria of success. In addition to casting a wider net in relation to stakeholders, the framework encapsulates a temporal view of value, in that it can be short or long term, realised or potential. Learning can have an immediate and also long-term impact on students and the community itself can have similarly short and long-term ramifications, for example, in terms of the reputational capital it generates.

As practitioner research, the results of this study should be made transparent and presented in such a way as to be of interest to a wide variety of stakeholders (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). As the teacher and one who has lead the cultivation of the community, the results should provide me with information to enable me to make decisions about how to shape the community and to maximise value for students in both future cohorts and for institutional stakeholders. For those who sponsor the learning environment, namely the university leaders and financiers, the results

should ideally demonstrate that the community aligns strategically with institutional objectives and is worthy of continued resourcing and support (Wenger et al., 2011). Personalised and life-long learning are core features of USQ's learning and teaching strategy.

6.1.2 How is the data used to discover value?

Thus, the main objective of applying the framework to any community or network is to create a compelling and robust picture of value creation in order to assess and promote it to a wide range of stakeholders. This is achieved by gathering two complementary types of data: cycle-specific indicators of value and value creation stories. The framework incorporates mixed methods, by integrating quantitative and qualitative data (Wenger & Trayner, 2014). Wenger et al. (2011) assert that by applying the framework and combining the various types of data, researchers should be able to, at the least, demonstrate correlations between observable outcomes and communal activity and at best, show causal links between these outcomes and the activities of networks and communities.

Wenger et al. (2011) suggest that in order to paint a reliable picture of how value is created within a community, it is necessary to gather data across value creation cycles. Using the framework, data were collected from students through short answer questionnaires across the full range of cycles. In some cycles, data were also drawn from other sources, such as attendance records and university records on grades. In addition to data relating to indicators of value creation, the authors advocate collecting data in the form of value creation stories. Whilst indicators alone are only suggestive of

value and stand-alone stories simply anecdotal, the effect of combining these types of data enables more definitive conclusions to be drawn about the links between the activities of the community and the value created. Chapter 7 tells select value creation stories, which will then be combined with value indicators and represented conceptually as value creation matrices.

The following section provides background information on the nature of value in this context. The character of each value creation cycle will be more fully discussed when analysing the value indicators present in the data for each cycle.

6.1.3 What is value and how is it created within a learning community?

The term *value* in relation to networks or communities is defined as “the learning enabled by community involvement” (Wenger et al., 2011, p. 7). I interpret this statement as encompassing both what was learned and how it was learned. Given the nature of the data collection tools in the framework which are designed to be completed by community participants, it is reasonable to assume that value is assessed from the perspective of the participants. The purpose of the framework is not to apply external criteria in order to assess and evaluate, but to discover the value or learning created by the learning community, as experienced by community members. Therefore, the value created may be particular to that community only. Rather than being purely evaluative, the framework is designed to also act as a learning tool for community members and other stakeholders (Wenger

& Trayner, 2014). In this sense, given the methodological approach in this study, the framework is an ideal tool to apply to the current context. No claims of generalizability will be made. The purpose of using the framework is to uncover the learning enabled by the community and to present this evidence to a broad range of stakeholders, ranging from community participants, to the university and the broader community of music educators.

Cycles of value creation. Within social learning communities, value is created and must be tracked across cycles of value creation (Wenger et al., 2011). Wenger et al. (2011) propose five cycles of value creation:

1. immediate value—activities and interactions;
2. potential value—knowledge capital;
3. applied value—changes in practice;
4. realised value—performance improvement; and
5. reframing value—redefining success.

In their study of value creation in online communities for educators, Booth and Kellogg (2014) note that, whilst previous studies have uncovered the types of immediate value that teachers gain from participation in such communities, studies demonstrating that participation leads to changes in professional practice—cycles 3 to 5 in the framework—are less prevalent. The major advantage for researchers in applying the framework is that it allows a far more detailed picture to emerge of the entire spectrum of value which is created for a broad range of stakeholders than has been previously possible (Booth & Kellogg, 2014; Wenger et al., 2011).

Wenger et al. (2011) caution that one must not assume that a lower cycle of value creation is causative of the next. This is because learning is not a linear process and one cycle does not neatly lead into the next in the messy reality of collaborative learning. Additionally, to be successful, a community need not necessarily evidence indicators of value from the final cycle. Different types of value hold different weight for different stakeholders. Certainly, for the students, the fact that the broader program they were enrolled in might evolve or improve as a result of their participation and other institutional considerations of value were of little import. Some students found it difficult to answer questions about these issues. However, for me as teacher/researcher, evidence of value for the later cycles was present and of great interest to me and I would argue, to the university and broader sector of higher education music educators. Select value creation stories will be used in the following chapter to provide evidence that these later cycles of value creation emerged out of the 2014 learning community.

6.1.4 Method

Adopting the same process used by Booth and Kellogg (2014), questionnaire data were restoried (Creswell, 2013) for each student participant into prose form. This process used a very simple form of narrative analysis to craft the data into stories. Given the nature of the questionnaires, these restoried versions mirrored generally the value creation cycles. A paradigmatic approach was used to establish the key indicators of value. Using the indicators from the framework as an a priori coding scheme the stories were analysed and indicator evidence gathered

relevant to each cycle of value creation. I then summarised the evidence to establish the primary indicators for each cycle. All questions and one student's completed questionnaires and restoried version are provided in Appendix B.

A simple restorying of the data resulted in a more holistic analysis, rather than an arbitrarily cyclical approach. When analysing the data, it became apparent that there were data in later cycles which were relevant to earlier cycles and vice versa. This discovery accorded with Wenger et al.'s (2011) suggestion that there are "complex relations among cycles" and that the cycles do not necessarily form a hierarchy (p. 21). It was therefore beneficial to restory the data in this way, as it yielded a more nuanced analysis.

6.2 Value indicators by cycle

6.2.1 Cycle 1. Immediate value: Activities and interactions

This cycle considers that the activities and interactions of a community have intrinsic value (Wenger et al., 2011). These activities are of value to participants if they are fun and inspiring, a source of revelation, relief, or if they provide new perspectives and foster innovation (Wenger et al., 2011). Many of the value indicators suggested by Wenger et al. (2011) for cycle 1 were present in the data. One of the main indicators of value in this cycle is the level of attendance. As teacher, I kept attendance records on my iPad each week using the "Attendance" app developed by David M. Reed Software. While attendance levels were good in semester one, they were excellent in semester two. Despite student withdrawals in semester

one, attendance was consistently 75%. Semester two attendance rates ranged from a minimum of 83% in some weeks to 100% in most weeks. These good attendance rates suggest that students found attendance worthwhile. Applying the framework terminology, good attendance rates act as a *proxy* for value creation to the extent that one might assume students found attendance valuable (Wenger et al., 2011).

Another indicator of immediate value was the level of participation within the community. Students rated the level of participation in the classes in a mostly positive way ranging from good to excellent. Cate commented that, “Overall I felt the whole group participated well and mostly sorted through logistical and personality issues.” Jane’s assessment was that “During first semester, the participation in the group classes was really good. Everyone was engaged with the activity and perhaps only when the activity lulled people started to get distracted.” A number of students—Maddie, Mark, Cate, Hope, Tamika—noted that peers’ availability for rehearsals outside of class time was an issue. Despite this, all groups managed to rehearse regularly outside of class time. Gemma’s group “got together outside of class at least once a week but practiced for hours. Some of our practice times went for 4-6 hours!” Jane’s group “rehearsed once a week on a Monday afternoon for up to 3 hours.” Other groups rehearsed more than once a week. Most students recognised that shorter, more focused rehearsals worked better than loose, open-ended sessions. Maddie reported that “We did rehearse outside of class at least once a week and at best 2 or 3 times. This was only for a few hours however, as we wanted it to be focused practice, rather than mucking around.” Given that rehearsals beyond

timetabled classes were not mandated, the level of participation in these rehearsals was good, despite the difficulties encountered with scheduling. Arranging rehearsals provided students with the opportunity to negotiate and compromise to accommodate the needs of others.

Social connections and their influence on participants are also indicative of cycle 1 value. All participants reported that having interactions with others was influential on their development. Students mostly identified other students as being influential, which confirms the analysis of the reflective data in the previous chapter. Jane noted that “Cate’s experience as a practicing musician has showed in our rehearsal and it’s taught me to look at music differently. She’s inspired me with her talent and feel for it despite not knowing theory.” Gemma reported that Maddie was a very influential connection for her: “Maddie helped me harmonise. In high school this was something I could not do! And here I am singing harmonies in 3 songs. She has really opened up my eyes about music and has helped me a lot!” Maddie was also influenced by Gemma:

Of these connections, Gemma was the most influential to me, because she has quite a low range in her voice and that inspired and encouraged me to develop my chest voice more. She also influenced all of the harmonies that I had and helped to include everyone in the piece.

Only Gemma, Mark and Cate mentioned teachers as being influential on their development. Mark and Cate appreciated the experience and advice of teachers and Gemma felt that the teachers demonstrated a caring attitude.

Everyone found it fun and/or inspiring to participate in the group classes and this sense of enjoyment created through interacting with others. Hope's experience was typical:

It was fun being able to be around nice and musically talented people and we can all have a laugh at each other without feeling judged. It's inspired me to just become a better person and musician so I can collaborate with more people.

Maddie felt similarly:

It was so much fun because I have made so many wonderful friendships that help to make music so much more fun that it already is (which is a lot!). I just love sharing my passion with so many other people that feel the same way, which is also inspiring. I think that seeing the talent in other groups inspires me to become as good as them also.

John found it enjoyable to leverage the talents of others: "The class was both fun and inspiring. It was great to work with other talents and try to utilize each member in the best way possible. I got on well with each member too."

Whilst all students had fun and felt inspired, they were also all challenged in some way, particularly during the earlier part of the year when the cycle 1 questionnaire was administered. Only Tamika reported not feeling challenged by her participation. John found it "maybe slightly hard at first to adjust since I hadn't worked with many people before in this

way.” All other students identified similar challenges to those present in the reflective data. These challenges included negotiating differing levels of ability/previous experience, scheduling rehearsals, losing group members, learning to play different styles of music, feeling comfortable working with others, getting to know each other and applying theory to practice. Whilst Wenger et al. (2011) do not list challenges as an indicator of value for cycle 1, they are included here, because challenges were a significant source of learning for students. It is argued that challenges should be included as an indicator of value for cycle 1 as they have value “in and of themselves” (Wenger et al., 2011, p. 19).

The findings from cycle 1 indicate that immediate value was created for participants. The findings in relation to connections made and the influence these connections had on participants support the reflective data. This was also the case in terms of the fun and inspiration experienced by the students. The cycle 1 data were also able to demonstrate that the level of attendance and participation was strong. Whilst the reasons for this are not explicit in the data, when used as a proxy, strong attendance and participation suggest that students found attending and participating valuable—they certainly found it fun and inspiring.

6.2.2 Cycle 2. Potential value: Knowledge capital

This cycle acknowledges that not all value produced by a community can be immediately realised and that activities and interactions within a community can produce various forms of *knowledge capital*, the value of which lies in its potential to be realised at some later time (Wenger et al.,

2011). Knowledge capital can take various forms—human capital, social capital, tangible capital, reputational capital and learning capital (Wenger et al., 2011).

Personal assets—human capital—in what ways has participation changed me? According to Wenger et al. (2011), this type of knowledge capital can be in the form of a new skill, perspective or key piece of information, as well as acquiring the ability to keep up with a changing field. It may simply be an experience of increased confidence or inspiration, or feeling cared for or caring for others, or a renewed sense of professional purpose. In their study of value creation for online communities of educators, Booth and Kellogg (2014) found that the primary value for community members was increased self-confidence and a sense of professionalism which resulted from their participation in discussion forums.

The student data revealed that they too experienced increased confidence. All but one student remarked on increased confidence as a result of participation. Typical examples include:

I have become a lot more confident with performing with a band/group and trusting them to play as rehearsed. (Tamika)

I am more open because of this class. I don't shy away to everything and I'm slowly becoming more and more vocal at getting my viewpoint across. I honestly think with this class I will just keep improving as a performer, singer and a person. (Gemma)

My confidence has massively grown in my performance as the feedback I received was consistent and the frequent performances have helped me to put that feedback to use. The performing has also made me much more comfortable on a stage. My singing has improved, again, a factor of confidence. (Jane)

These experiences reported in the questionnaire data align with those of the previous findings from the reflective data in that students experienced increased agency on the individual dimension. As Wenger et al. (2011) note, increased confidence provides personal value for participants in a community. The value of increased confidence is not only immediate but has the potential to yield future benefits.

Whilst having fun and being inspired have immediate value, as mentioned above, the framework also sees these experiences as containing potential value, particularly where the fun or inspiring experiences motivate participants to change in some way—“How has my participation changed me?” (Wenger et al., 2011, p. 22). Jack commented that his group “motivated me in their incredible ideas and skills, they have made me love music even more and through doing these songs I have also become a better composer for it.” Shane stated that “Working with musicians with good ears in and out of the group inspires and motivates me to train my ears daily.” In his reflective journal, Shane reported spending many hours on aural training as a result of working with others and realising that he needed to improve this aspect of his musicianship. Students were changed through their participation by acquiring new skills. These skills have the potential to be used at any future time and therefore contain both immediate and potential

value and increase the personal assets of participants.

All participants reported acquiring a broad range of new skills. These findings accord with the findings in Chapter 5, so will not be repeated at any great length here. Suffice to report that the skills ranged from the interpersonal—communication, problem solving, working with others, leadership skills, patience, flexibility, giving and receiving constructive criticism, mediation skills—to the musical—arranging songs, writing and reading lead sheets, listening to the group, sight reading, creative interpretation, time-keeping, learning new styles, playing different instruments, versatility, harmonising, adapting one’s playing for the group, rudiments, playing by ear, controlling dynamics and understanding different instruments’ roles in an ensemble. These skills were both relevant to the immediate context of making music within small ensembles but, as will be seen below, their potential value was, in many cases, realised by students who applied these skills in contexts beyond the learning community itself.

Wenger et al. (2011) view a change in perspective as an addition to the personal assets of participants, forming part of the knowledge capital produced by the community. All students reported a change in perspective with some giving multiple examples of the ways in which their perspective had altered. Some students simply realised that they needed to reframe their ideas around workload and effort, in order to succeed in music. For example, Maddie said that she “got a reality check on how much I have to apply myself to be successful with music. I had a completely different attitude when I started in relation to dedication and hard work!!!” Shane simply noted that “music is hard. Real hard!” Others such as Gemma and

Shane experienced changes in their perspective due the fact that they felt their abilities had increased. Cate gained an appreciation of “the way theory is helping my music practice. I really love that! It's slow, small steps but it's working.” Maddie experienced a change in her belief of how much time she had to achieve certain things, such as practice—previously believing she was too busy to fit music into her lifestyle. Jack’s participation ignited a passion to simply do “more and more” music and to create original music. Shane realised that “not everyone is as committed as I am. Which is okay. I've always thought commitment=good person. But I think I've become wiser in that regard.” These changes in perspective or mindset have the potential to keep yielding benefits for these students in the future, both within and beyond the learning community and are therefore a valuable personal asset created by participation.

Relationships and connections—social capital—have my social relationships changed? Wenger et al. (2011) conceptualize knowledge as a “collective good distributed across a community or network” and therefore view social relations as a type of knowledge capital (p. 20). Examples of how social relations can create knowledge capital are feeling less isolated by knowing who to ask or trust, building one’s reputation, developing a common community language, or simply feeling a sense of camaraderie or companionship whilst taking on difficult or challenging tasks.

It takes time to build personal relationships and connections, so it is unsurprising that by the time of the cycle 2 questionnaire during week 29 of the academic year, almost all students felt less isolated than at the start of the year. As a result, they knew who to turn to for help or advice. Jane noted

that “I feel less isolated now, I think the fact my relationship with the other musicians and lecturers has grown to a point where I can trust them and seek help means I feel much more confident and comfortable at Uni.” As in Jane’s experience, as relationships are formed, participants have a wider range of people they can turn to for help or guidance and many students reported that they felt they could trust others enough to do this. Again, the fact that many students relied on other students for guidance and support was also evidenced in the reflective data. Maddie used connections she formed in her group to help her with personal issues:

Because of this class, I now have a huge group of musicians to come to and learn from and I'm surprised how tight the friendships are between groups. I trust them and it gives me confidence knowing I have people to help me and that are in the same position as me . . . The friendship I have formed with Gemma has really helped me through some personal struggles. I have a lot going on and a lot of past issues that creep up on me every now and again that affect any performance/confidence and she has really helped to overcome these outside of class. Shane has really helped me to see a new side of things. His mind set is ALWAYS so positive and it is such an inspiration.

Jack was typically forthright on this issue: “The extended period of time I have spent in this course has made me trust all of the members and I feel no fear in asking them for help.” Gemma was also unequivocal: “I would trust my class mates with anything.” Jane valued the support from staff when she

was having a hard time: “Working with the lecturers has shown me the extent of their skills and knowledge and having gone through a few difficulties they've proven they're there to support us/me.” Shane felt similarly: “I have gained a lot of trust in the lecturers this semester. I turn to them when I feel I've strayed from my path or can't find the way back. In musicianship, song writing and life, I guess.” In short, most students reported that they had people within the community they trusted and could turn to for help. This network of relationships based on mutual trust and respect built social capital and of course, many of these relationships continue to grow, well beyond the confines of the learning community of 2014. In some instances, as will be discussed further below, these relationships were leveraged to achieve things outside the learning community, evidencing the application of value created by the community in different contexts.

Reputation is another form of social capital with the potential to be realised or leveraged at some future time. Students found this issue challenging to address. Some had not thought about their participation contributing to their reputation and others were not comfortable speculating about what others may think of them. Others seemed to assume that a reputation can only be a positive thing and that therefore they weren't gaining one! Some of the more mature students did however understand the nature of a reputation and felt that they were gaining one. Jane said: “I very much feel that I'm gaining a reputation. I seem to be becoming characterised by the fact I've had to fill in a lot of gaps when I've lost members of my ensemble. Going by feedback this has been quite successful.” Shane was

realistic about the nature of his possible reputation: “I feel I'm most definitely gaining a reputation. Good or bad I don't mind.” On the other hand, Mark was insightful enough to realise that due to a number of personality clashes he was gaining a reputation, but “not all positive perhaps”. Tamika was aware that she “may be gaining a reputation for my lack of arriving early/on time, which I am looking to improve drastically”. Some students were therefore aware that reputation “cuts both ways”. These responses show an awareness of reputation as an important form of social capital, which has the potential to be either of great value or an impediment for participants in learning communities.

Collaborative learning created value in the form of social capital. The sheer amount of time spent together meant that students felt progressively less isolated and knew whom to turn to for help or advice. Furthermore, whilst they found it difficult to articulate, students revealed an awareness of reputation as a form of social capital created by participation.

Transformed ability to learn—learning capital—has my view of learning been changed? Learning capital is created for those participants for whom less formal learning environments are new and when they experience a different way of learning in this context (Wenger et al., 2011). In two of the communities studied by Booth and Kellogg (2014), members valued highly the collaborative learning offered through participation in online communities.

In relation to whether students experienced this style of learning as being different to their previous experiences, the responses ranged from

“not that different” (from Tamika, who had studied at TAFE) to “much different” (Jane). Other previous experiences learning music for the cohort ranged from none (e.g. Shane, Jack) to school music (Jane, Maddie, Hope, John) to professional experience (Cate, Mark). Points of difference identified by the students included smaller class size, more personalised learning, regular and quality feedback, more practical work, higher expectations, higher workload due to extra personal practice and rehearsals and a higher level of freedom in not being told what and how to play. Some students felt free—even “liberated” (Jack)—to work within the environment created and a number of students experienced the learning as “a lot more personal” (Mark).

Within this space, students saw new opportunities for learning. Because Jane was used to always working with notated music, she commented that she was “learning a lot collaborating with others and creating music without a set score.” Jane also realised that she still has “a lot of growing to do.” Gemma had not previously realised that she could learn from observing others: “I learnt that I could learn new things about performing by watching people play their instruments or sing.” Cate and Maddie learned how much personal practice plays a role in collaborative music making. Others such as Jack and Shane saw new opportunities for collaboration to play a role in their learning, particularly in relation to song writing. There was good evidence of the creation of learning capital from their participation in the learning environment. This confirms the finding that collaborative learning increased students’ individual agency because it provided them with the ability to access learning experiences (Karlsen,

2011). These experiences inevitably centred around interactions with peers.

Resources—tangible capital—what access to new resources do I now have? Tangible capital is created when participation in a community gives its members “privileged access to certain resources” (Wenger et al., 2011, p. 20). Resources might include information, documents, tools and procedures. Whilst there has been ample evidence to suggest that value was created by the creation of intangible assets—social, human and learning capital—there was no evidence to suggest the learning environment produced any tangible, collective assets for students—documents, procedures, processes. One possible example of tangible assets was the lead sheets created by each group. Lead sheets are musical scores which contain the form, melody, lyrics and chord symbols for a song. They are usually only one or two pages long. Students produced lead sheets for rehearsals, but these were not pooled to create a collective resource. This could be seen as a missed opportunity to create a resource, however, giving students access to a library of lead sheets defeats one of the main learning objectives of the course which is to develop written musical language. Whilst students are given examples of good lead sheets to enable them to create useful resources, allowing them to repurpose others’ lead sheets rather than writing their own would not be as beneficial to learning. In short, there was no evidence of tangible capital being produced by the learning community for students though, given the learning objectives of the course, this is not a surprising result. However, as teacher, I have collected examples of lead sheets (both good and bad) to use as a learning resource for future cohorts.

Collective intangible assets—reputational capital—has the community acquired a reputation? This class of assets includes “the reputation of the community or network, the status of a profession, or the recognition of the strategic relevance of the domain” (Wenger et al., 2011, p. 20). It was difficult for students to reflect on their individual reputations and even more so the collective reputation of the learning community. As a result, there was no evidence from the student data to suggest that the learning community was building reputational capital.

6.2.3 Cycle 3. Applied value: Changes in practice

Applied value arises when knowledge capital is leveraged and applied to specific situations, resulting in changes in practice. The overarching question for participants to answer is “What difference has it made to my practice/life/context?” (Wenger et al., 2011). Indicators of applied value include using a relationship formed within the community to achieve something outside of the community such as the formation of new collaborations, applying skills acquired from community participation in other contexts and gaining new perspectives and ways of practising or communicating.

All students reported applying the skills they had acquired through their participation in both the immediate and other contexts. Whilst application in the immediate context is to be expected, applying skills in external contexts demonstrates the far-reaching value that participation in such a learning community can have. A number of students—Hope, Mark, Tamika, Maddie—reported using the skills they had acquired in the learning

community in their workplaces. Tamika reflected that “Sometimes when I’m at work, I have more confidence and when I’m in a meeting I let my opinion be heard now. This has been because of this class.” Maddie had a similar experience:

This class has boosted my confidence and affected my personality at uni, home, work and everywhere else I go. I can talk and perform without going shy and blanking on what to say/think because I am used to being around and working with people.

Hope and Mark applied their newly acquired skills when teaching students in their private studios. Jack applied musical skills learnt when playing at his church “because I can now read charts to play the music”.

Students also reported applying skills in their personal lives. Gemma, who struggled with confidence throughout the year, wrote about applying her growing confidence in her performing skills to be “happy with me as a person” and thought that “being confident in my voice and while on stage has helped me grow and to become a better and happier person”. John too felt he was able to apply skills learnt in “everyday life. I used to maybe be a bit of a loner, but now communicate better as a result of working with others”. Maddie felt the communication skills she had developed in the class helped her resolve issues more easily:

I've applied these communication skills both in my ensemble and at my workplace—everywhere really. I have found after being in this class, I can usually find the resolution to an issue by communicating effectively to make each party happy.

Mark even said that he applied the skills in his “friendships and even planning of holidays”! All students reported that they had applied skills learnt through the learning community in a wide range of contexts beyond the immediate musical context and that participation had made a difference to their practice, life or context.

In addition to the broad application of skills acquired, 50% of the students explicitly stated that they had leveraged connections made within the learning community to achieve something outside of the community. Some students reported collaborating on new projects—Shane worked with Maddie on a duo project; Shane and Jack wrote songs together. Others became involved in teaching their fellow students new instruments—Shane taught Jack guitar; Tamika and Gemma helped Jack with singing; Hope taught Cate theory; Maddie helped Gemma with her harmonies. Three of the students worked with a primary school choir. As teacher, I was able to refer remunerated work to Jane with the Australian Youth Choir, as I was confident in her ability to both engage and direct young children musically. These extra-curricular activities arose because of the connections formed within the learning community. They provided the students with further opportunities to apply their newly acquired skills in a broad range of contexts.

6.2.4 Cycle 4. Realised value: Performance improvement

Realized value is created when knowledge capital is applied, resulting in improved performance (Wenger et al., 2011). The key question for participants to answer is “What difference has it made to my ability to

achieve what matters to me or other stakeholders?” (Wenger et al., 2011, p. 23). Wenger et al. (2011) stress that new skills or new tools are not sufficient to evidence realised value, even when applied. Whilst it is tempting to assume that the application of new skills or resources improves performance, this cannot be guaranteed. It is necessary to go one step further and “reflect on what effects the application of knowledge capital is having on the achievement of *what matters to stakeholders* [emphasis added], including members who apply a new practice” (Wenger et al., 2011, p. 21).

In hindsight, the questions suggested by the framework for this cycle did not elicit responses from students which drew their attention to what mattered to them. It was therefore difficult to find direct evidence to link the application of new skills to performance improvement in a domain which mattered to students. As noted previously, the framework encourages the inclusion of multiple types and sources of data and indeed for each cycle, lists types of data which are quantitative. The framework notes that “aspects of performance that can be affected by social learning are often the objects of established metrics, which are already monitored” (Wenger et al., 2011, p. 30). Due to the lack of detailed reflection on what matters to students in the questionnaires, I used overall student achievement data for the year to examine improvements in performance. The use of this data is based on the assumption that, because they are enrolled in music practice courses, improving music practice mattered to students. Table 5 shows that six out of the 10 participants improved their marks from semester one to semester two. Tamika and Mark remained in the same grade band but received fewer

marks in semester two and Maddie and Shane dropped from High Distinctions to A's. Jane and Jack improved their marks by the greatest margin.

Table 5—Participants' results in MUI1001 and MUI1002

	Semester one		Semester two	
Cate	86.3	HD	90.75	HD
Hope	79.58	A	83.05	A
Maddie	87.8	HD	81.7	A
Jack	79.59	A	87.5	HD
Tamika	56.4	C	50.6	C
Mark	80.4	A	79.4	A
Gemma	57.4	C	66.6	B
Jane	82.8	A	95.7	HD
Shane	84.9*	HD	83.2	A
John	65.5	B	69.75	B

Note. HD 85-100; A 75-84; B 65-74; C 50-64.

*Marks between 84.5 and 84.9 are upgrade to HD.

Despite the fact that the questions were not well-framed to elicit from most students evidence of what mattered to them, some students did reflect on this and thought that the ways in which they could conceive of participating in music had changed. Jack provided one clear example:

My participation in this class has changed the way I view music and my participation in it so much. I used to be a solo thinker, that the music must adhere to my wishes, but now I see it as a group, collaborative synthesis between musicians. I see so many more opportunities and innovations to be made in music and I want to do more work, rather than solo work. I feel I can be relied on as a group member to do what is right by the music.

For Jack, not only did his ideas on “what matters” to him change, but his membership in the community enabled him to work in this new context and “do what is right by the music”, which in itself is further evidence of “what matters” to Jack. Jane commented that “From these classes this year, I’ve

learnt that there's more to music-making than reading from a score and I've begun to see how I might make a career in it as a performer." Again, one can assume that making a career in music is something that matters to Jane, given her enrolment in a tertiary music program. Some students felt that they had achieved new things and saw themselves as "more successful generally" (Wenger et al., 2011, p. 23), which is further indication of realised value. Jack ventured into playing new instruments, felt more open to new experiences and began to write songs collaboratively with Shane. Mark reported significant breakthroughs on his instrument, as did others, including Maddie, Gemma and Shane.

Another angle from which to view realised value is improved performance for stakeholders other than participants. Students were asked: "What has the university been able to achieve because of your participation in this class?" A number of students reported being involved in activities promoting the music discipline at USQ. Gemma "met Maddie through this class and we performed in 'Glee or not to Glee' which promotes the musical talent we have at USQ". Mark was happy to "talk up the great teaching here over my summer break—recommend it to any musician young or old". Jane said that "the work I've done with the primary schools (due to my connections) has been a good advertisement for USQ". Three students Cate, Hope and Maddie performed an acoustic 80s cover and an original live on a local radio station, where they spoke about their learning experiences in the courses. Cate also added that "I promote the music program to people I come across in daily life because I really believe in the value of this program." Jack also promoted the program through word of mouth: "I have

provided positive feedback about the quality of this university and this course and have helped shape peoples' decisions about their future with USQ and helped them with their auditions." These are all examples of applying knowledge capital generated by participation in the learning community to affect what matters for the university as a stakeholder in the learning community. Students who are willing to speak about positive learning experiences are of great value to the university to drive future enrolments, assist in retention and to establish the reputation of the music discipline at USQ. This value is both potential in that the university can benefit from this value in years to come and realized, because certain students enrolled in 2015 as a result of prior positive student experience.

6.2.5 Cycle 5. Reframing value: Redefining success

The final cycle of value is created when "social learning causes a reconsideration of the learning imperatives and the criteria by which success is defined" (Wenger et al., 2011, p. 21). The overarching question to be answered is "Has it changed my or other stakeholders' understanding and definition of what matters?" (Wenger et al., 2011, p. 23). New definitions of success can occur at the individual, collective and institutional levels. Westerlund (2008) describes "reframing value" when she notes that "[v]aluation is born in processes where the reached end is a means for future ends-in-view as well as a test of valuations previously made" (p. 87).

As the year progressed, students redefined their criteria for a successful music performance. This is most evident in their own assessments of the first semester and second semester concerts. Students

were asked in the cycle 2 questionnaire in week 29 about their opinions of the first semester concert, performed in week 15. Many stated that the quality of performances was not high but they could already sense that the quality of the final concert for the year would far exceed that of the first concert. Jack said that

Personally I believe the next concert will be 350% better than the last one. I did not feel engaged or proud of my group or what we did and I feel we brought the quality down, perhaps the same issues were seen in other groups. The next will be far better as I feel a lot more confident in my group.

Tamika echoed Jack's sentiments: "Everyone did really well in the first semester concert but compared to how we are sounding now last semester's will look weak. We have all grown and gotten stronger in performing."

Shane felt that "[the first semester] concert was not of a performance ready standard in my opinion. This semester should easily raise the bar." Students were not given the opportunity to reflect upon the final concert in the surveys, as the final survey was administered prior to the concert, however, it is clear from the reflective data that students such as Jack and Tamika felt that the standard improved dramatically during the year. A reading of the reflective data together with the survey data indicates that this was a general observation of the group and it was also my experience as teacher. In this sense, value was reframed at both the individual and collective levels.

Experiencing the improvement in standard caused students to reframe what they viewed as a successful performance. This is something which is an

ongoing and lifelong process of reframing for performing musicians, but for many of these students, this was their first true “reframing” of success, as they were not previously able to “recognize and affirm weaknesses and bad habits” (Mark).

6.3 Chapter summary

Wenger et al. (2011) situate the assessment and promotion of value creation through social learning within the interplay of both personal and collective narratives and ground and aspirational narratives. Personal narratives tell the stories of participants’ experiences of social learning and collective narratives refer to the overarching story of the community itself—its formation, evolution, reputation etc. Personal and collective narratives can be simple ground narratives of what has happened within the community—what activities took place, what connections were made, the experiences of participants—or they can be aspirational narratives which redefine success for the community or participants and re-envision what matters to the community and its members. It is the tension between ground and aspirational narratives which “creates a space for learning, and deciding what is worth learning” (Wenger et al., 2011, p. 17), in other words, the space in which to assess and promote the value created through social learning (see Figure 3).

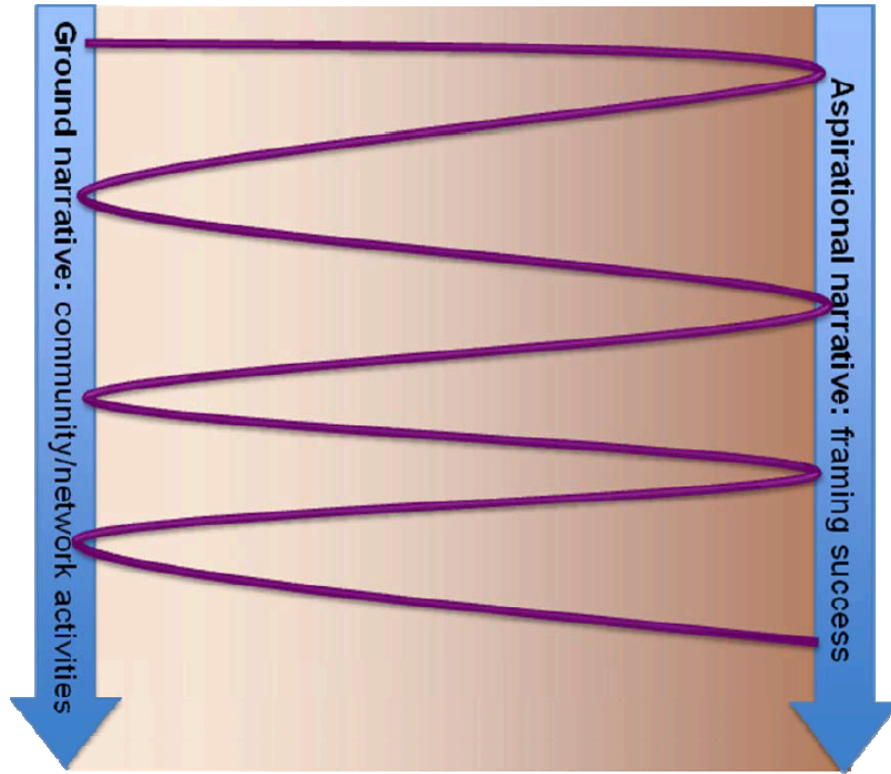


Figure 3—Productive tensions between aspirational and everyday narratives (Wenger, Trayner, & de Laat, 2011, p. 17)

The specific indicators for the 2014 learning community can be summarised as follows:

Value indicators for the 2014 learning community									
	Cycle 1: Immediate value	Cycle 2: Potential value	Cycle 3: Applied value	Cycle 4: Realised value	Cycle 5: Reframing value				
Ground narrative: community activities ↓	High attendance	Confidence				Aspirational narrative: framing success ↓			
	Good to excellent participation	Motivating							
	Influential connections	New ways of learning					Leveraging connections	Improved performance for some	Higher performance standards
	Fun, inspiring, challenging	New skills					Applying skills in other contexts	Promotion of USQ	Higher personal expectations
		Changes in perspective							
	Building trust								
	Building individual reputations								

Figure 4—Summary of value indicators

As Figure 4 indicates, student data provided ample evidence of value

indicators for the lower cycles of value creation but were less supportive for the later cycles. As noted previously, the fact that there is sparser evidence of value indicators in later cycles does not necessarily mean that the learning community has been unsuccessful. Value indicators alone only act as proxies for value creation (Wenger et al., 2011). Whilst improved performance, as an example, may be as a result of the social learning which takes place in a community, causal attribution cannot be made without further evidence (Wenger et al., 2011). In order to build a robust picture of value creation across the spectrum of cycles, the framework also calls for the collection of data in the form of value creation stories, which can be both personal and collective. These stories, when combined with indicators, paint a compelling picture of the value creation from social learning across the spectrum of value creation cycles. Against the backdrop of the indicators of value detailed in this chapter, the following chapter presents the value creation stories for the 2014 learning community.

Chapter 7. Value Creation Stories

The previous chapter presented the indicators of value created by the 2014 learning community. Wenger et al.'s (2011) framework for promoting and assessing value in communities and networks proposes that in addition to value indicators data, data in the form of value creation stories help build a compelling picture of value creation by communities. This chapter presents a sample of value creation stories for the 2014 learning community. In contrast to Chapters 5 and 6 where themes were presented as the final results of analysis, the stories themselves form the results of this chapter. Each story in this chapter is mapped onto the value indicators outlined in Chapter 6 to appreciate the relationship between stories and indicators. In Chapter 8, these results are summarised and discussed and presented as two final value creation matrices—one for students and one for me as teacher.

7.1 Overview

Whilst cycle-specific value indicators provide detail of value creation, it is in the context of stories that we fully appreciate the significance of participation for members and the value of the community to other stakeholders. A common feature of value creation stories is that they are told across cycles of value creation, but they may not necessarily cover all cycles. Stories can be told from different perspectives. Stories of individual experiences are personal stories. These stories can be general, about overall community participation, or about a specific activity or critical event (Webster & Mertova, 2007; Wenger et al., 2011). Value creation stories can also be collective. A collective story relates to the overall identity developed

by the community. All stories can traverse any number of cycles from a ground narrative about events or activities to an aspirational narrative about reframing the criteria of success. A learning community does not need to establish the presence of value in the final cycle to necessarily be successful (Wenger et al., 2011). The framework provides its own guidelines for the telling of the specific genre of stories known as value creation stories. Whilst not explicitly stated in the framework, the five cycles of value creation loosely follow a chronological format typical of much narrative analysis (Creswell, 2013).

Narrative analysis was used to create the value creation stories presented in this chapter. Rather than seeking to identify commonalities within the data using paradigmatic reasoning, narrative reasoning was applied to the data to identify the differences and diversity in participants' experiences (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009a; Polkinghorne, 1995). I have used my own judgment as researcher, informed by the framework itself and the previous data analysis to decide which stories would create a fuller picture of value creation and would best answer research question 2 on the value of collaborative learning for participants and other stakeholders. Stories have not been included because they represent common experiences, but rather, because they tell of a diverse range of experiences (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009a).

The overall process of value assessment involves moving back and forth between indicators and stories. In analysing students' value indicators data, it became clear that there was less evidence for the later cycles of value creation than for the earlier cycles. I have therefore included stories

which provide some evidence of these later cycles to paint a fuller picture of value creation than would result by simply relying on indicators alone.

I have also included stories which may be of interest to a broad range of stakeholders. My stories as teacher may be of interest to other music educators working in collaborative settings, or who are considering doing so. These stories may also be of interest to USQ as the sponsoring organisation, as well as other organisations considering such sponsorship. The sample of students' stories aims to present a balanced representation in terms of gender—two males, two females—and student age and life experience—two school leavers, two mature-aged students. A number of individual stories are told about both overall and specific experiences. To complement these individual stories, the chapter presents the overall collective story of the learning community. The stories presented aim to provide a balanced overall picture of the learning community—some promote and celebrate its positive attributes and others demonstrate the challenges of participation for some members. As previously explained, data from students who did not complete the year were excluded from this study. However, their participation, albeit limited, has not been entirely lost from the story of the community. Some of the stories presented here provide an insight into the impact that these students' departures had on both the teacher and the remaining students.

The value creation stories are presented as follows:

Overall—Melissa (teacher)

Overall—the learning community

Playing the changes: M. Forbes

Overall—Jack (student)

Overall—Cate (student)

Specific—Maddie (student)

Specific—Melissa (teacher)

Specific—Shane (student)

Each story is followed by a brief discussion of the narrative in relation to the value indicators and then mapped onto those indicators to create a visual representation of the relationship between the story and the indicators.

7.2 Overall value creation stories

Overall value creation stories tell of the experience of participation over the life of the learning community (Wenger et al., 2011). The story of my overall experience as teacher is included here, as well as the story of the learning community itself. In addition, I have detailed Cate and Jack's overall personal value creation stories as students.

7.2.1 Overall personal value creation story—teacher—Melissa

The following story summarises my experiences of teaching within the 2014 learning community:

My role in the 2014 learning community was teacher. I was heavily involved in developing the collaborative learning environment during the previous two iterations of the courses in 2012 and 2013.

In semester one, I co-taught the class of 24 students and in semester

two I taught the group alone, as the numbers were much smaller—we ended up with 11 students in semester two. Each week the way we spent class time was different, but we usually worked on things either as a class where students would present work in progress for feedback from the group, or I would supervise the rehearsals of the smaller ensembles during class time. These ensembles also rehearsed unsupervised outside class time. A few times we had more formal classes where we discussed assessment and expectations.

My experience of the year was one of extremes—high highs and low lows. Semester one was very challenging for me as a teacher. It was the largest group we had ever had in the course. Some students took the course as an elective and didn't take it too seriously and others simply weren't that committed to the process of rehearsing and making music. Around week 4 in semester one, I started to see the first cracks appear. Students from almost every group had come to see me about difficulties they were having with other students who weren't committed to the rehearsal process, particularly outside of class time. Whilst the news was disappointing, the fact that students were telling me about it was reassuring. It was the first time since teaching the courses that students had come to me so early in the year with such issues. I saw this as a sign that whilst some students would eventually drop out because they weren't really committed to the course, others were very committed. I felt that the students who came to see me really wanted to take responsibility for their learning.

Because of these difficulties, during week 5 of semester we had a series of interviews with each student to check in with their progress and their experiences of their groups. My co-teacher and I enlisted the help of a colleague to sit in on these interviews. Most of these interviews went smoothly, but some were really challenging. A couple of the students struggled to understand what professional conduct meant within the rehearsal context and perceived the interviews as a wielding of authority by the staff. Whilst we were trying to provide these students with professional guidance, they interpreted our actions as a “laying down of the law”. I found this upsetting, because I had been trying to cultivate a collaborative atmosphere amongst students and between staff and students. Staff wanted to work together with all the students to facilitate their enjoyment and learning about making music. I felt that a couple of the students couldn’t conceptualize their teachers as collaborators rather than authority figures. Because we were challenging these students about their behaviour, we were seen as immediately falling into the role of disciplinarian, rather than as professional mentors.

Around June, after a series of further problems within the groups, I became quite despondent. I really doubted the use of collaborative learning and I thought that perhaps I had made a huge mistake in getting students to work this way. I felt as if the entire project of instigating a collaborative learning community had been born out of a bizarre combination of naiveté and hubris on my part. I also felt the weight of traditional music education bearing down on me. If the one-

to-one model had been the go-to method for so long in conservatoires and universities, who was I to try something different? At this time I felt some real conflict. Whilst I understood why I had implemented a collaborative model in this particular context—from both philosophical and pragmatic perspectives—in practice it didn't seem to be working too well.

After doing some more reading on collaborative learning and leaning a lot on my colleagues, I felt a little more comfortable in acknowledging the limits to which I could influence group dynamics and individual behaviour. My reading also made it clear that collaborative work does not always run smoothly. Because of this reading, the support of colleagues and my good connections with students who were committed to the class, I resolved to carry on. I viewed these challenges as opportunities for growth both for the students and myself. I was also inspired by some of the students who had also faced challenges during the first semester, but had viewed these challenges as learning opportunities.

The semester one experience was really valuable for me as teacher. I became aware of how much I was personally invested in the success of each student and that this not only put pressure on the students, but also caused me great stress when students failed to reach my expectations. I have since learnt to better accept that students are on their own journey and my ability to influence that is limited. I relate to McWilliam (2009) when she writes about meddling teachers who

have high expectations and provide high support for students, but I can now also say that I understand, as she points out, that those things in and of themselves cannot guarantee learning outcomes. I also learned that I was personally invested in the success of the learning community. I realised the potential dangers of this for my research in terms of bias. I became much more aware of my bias and have since worked to cultivate a constant awareness of my leanings. I also came to understand that the challenges faced by me as teacher and by the students, would actually be useful for my research and would help me present a more balanced view of the learning enabled by the community. Sometimes learning is born out of fun or inspiring events or positive interactions with others and other times, learning arises from suffering!

As the year progressed into semester two, my experience of the learning community became far more positive. The class size was easier to manage and after a few early drop outs, the numbers settled to 11 students who worked in three separate ensembles. I felt a good connection with each and every student who remained. I enjoyed the intimacy we shared as a smaller group with only me as their teacher. We really got along well and had quite a few laughs. I looked forward to my interactions with these students. I felt that we had gotten to know each other sufficiently to be much more relaxed and open. We'd also been through some tough times together and weathered the storm. I felt less isolated as teacher and more like someone who was a part of the community.

We had a couple of sessions in semester two where I “read the riot act” to the students, but in a fairly low-key way. For example, we had an entire class dedicated to talking about the big picture issues—what motivates us to be musicians, my background in another career—as well as going through the assessment requirements in great detail. These discussions helped clarify what was needed in order to be successful in the course. I had learned throughout the year that I needed to be absolutely black and white when discussing expectations. This is an area I really improved in because of my earlier more challenging interactions with students. I felt I was gaining a reputation as being “harsh but fair” which was fine with me.

One of our classes during September really stood out for me as being a turning point for the learning community. Each group presented four songs to the class for feedback. They all did a really great job and showed a lot of creativity in their work. I told the class that it was the highest standard I’d seen since teaching the course. I challenged them to really “up the ante” on their own expectations for their concert performances at the end of semester. My feedback was that whilst the musical ideas were fantastic, the execution still needed a lot of work. I challenged each group to work hard to finesse the musical details.

The end of semester concert was a great success. I was so proud of all three groups, because they had really taken up my challenge. The quality of the concert was high and audience feedback was glowing. The concert was attended by family and friends, some of whom had

travelled quite a distance to be there. Many of the students remarked on how much everyone had improved since first semester. Afterwards I told them that the concert had meant a lot to me as teacher. I told them about the very first concert I put on in 2009 at USQ. It had consisted of only a few vocalists singing to backing tracks—there were no ensembles back then—and we had an audience in the single figures! The 2014 concert was a significant turning point for me because for the first time I could see that in a few short years, some good was coming out of the new way of doing things. I actually shed a tear or two!

Teaching this cohort taught me a lot about collaborative learning. As the year progressed, I became much better at understanding and accepting my role as teacher in this environment. I was truly acting more as a guide rather than a master. I learned that my influence over group dynamics was limited and that I couldn't control what went on in the group rehearsals outside of class time where most of the problems for students start. I gained confidence in handling difficult students and accepting that I play a limited role in influencing the journeys of each student. I also learned how to work with the students to re-shape my and their expectations of what a quality performance looks like. I now understand that this is something that needs to be re-envisioned with each cohort and that flexibility is a key component of creating an environment ripe for collaborative learning.

Above all, these experiences taught me that teaching within

collaborative learning challenged me to be creative and to improvise my teaching. It certainly was a challenge to face each week without much of an idea of what was going to happen. I learned to become more comfortable with uncertainty and to trust my own instinctive responses. My responses to the constantly changing cohort and student dynamics and students' difficulties and learning needs usually had to be instinctive and improvised "in the moment". This experience was very different to standing out the front of a class and delivering a lecture on music theory! I felt empowered by my experience with the 2014 cohort, because I had been faced with significant challenges throughout the year, but through creative solutions and an acceptance of "making it up as I went along", the class ended the year on a high note.

The most tangible outcome of my teaching experience in 2014 was an entirely new course for first year students called "Preparing for success in music". This course was a result of the class discussions we had during 2014 about what it takes to be successful not only in university studies, but as a career musician. It was also a result of dealing with the challenges of participation in semester one. The course covers topics such as identifying motivations, mindsets, successful collaboration, giving and receiving constructive criticism, conducting peer and self-assessments, effective practice and performance techniques and understanding how music can be learned in a broad range of contexts. It is designed to help students clarify early on in their music studies whether they are motivated and possess

the wherewithal to pursue music as both a student and as a professional.

The relationship between my story and the value indicators from student data can be seen in Figure 5. My experience of teaching the 2014 cohort corroborates many of the value indicators in the student data. Because my experience resulted in the creation of a tangible asset in the new course “Preparing for success in music”, this has been added as a new value indicator on the matrix in cycle 3. An indicator relating to critical reflection on teaching practice has also been added in cycle 5.

My story traversed all cycles of value creation. To summarise, my story began with challenges and establishing connections with students (cycle 1). From there, I gained confidence, acquired new skills, changes in perspective, built trust between myself and the remaining students and was building my own reputation as teacher (cycle 2). Later in the year I was able to leverage connections with certain students to promote USQ through the final concert (cycles 3 and 4). I created a tangible asset from my experiences in the form of a new course (cycle 3) and in doing so, I reflected on my own practice as a teacher (cycle 5). It was my experience that my performance as a teacher improved as the year progressed (cycle 4) and the entire experience led me to critically reflect on my teaching practice and reframe what a successful collaborative learning community might look like (cycle 5). The critical insight gained from my experience was that I had the ability to teach creatively, instinctively and improvise responses to the constantly shifting learning environment. The value of my experience is relevant and useful to me as teacher, to my students, to the sponsoring organisation and

to other music educators using or considering collaborative learning for music practice.

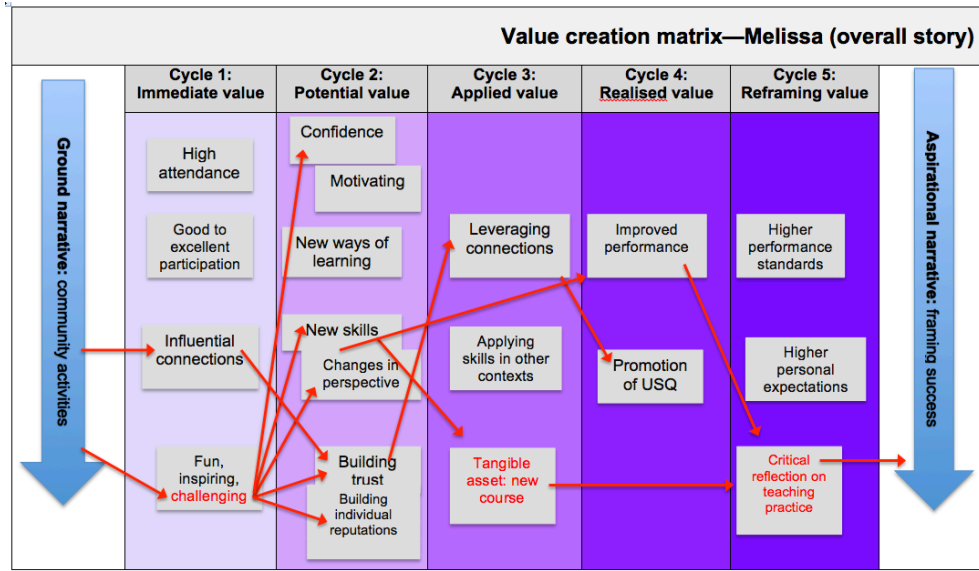


Figure 5—Value creation matrix for teacher (overall story)

7.2.2 Overall collective value creation story of the learning community

The overall story of the learning community seeks to capture the community’s identity and how it developed over the life of the community.

It brings together the voices of the student participants:

Throughout the year, we participated in classes where we all came together to develop our musical skills and to provide feedback to each other. We also rehearsed with our groups both during and outside class time. Whilst the classes were helpful to keep track of our overall direction and for giving and receiving feedback, the rehearsals were the most valuable learning experiences. Organizing and conducting rehearsals taught us lots of skills. It required good time management and we had to negotiate with each other around our different schedules. Sometimes this process could be really frustrating. In

semester one particularly it was hard to find rehearsal times which suited each member of the group because some of the students had different timetables or worked a lot outside of uni.

Some of us found it challenging to deal with people leaving the course. Lots of people left during and at the end of semester one and a few more dropped out in semester two. In some cases, this caused disruption to the groups and it was also difficult on a more personal level because friendships had been formed. Students leaving caused some of us who remained to ponder a little more deeply about our own reasons and motivations for studying music. For some of us, it provoked a good internal conversation and honesty with ourselves about why we were enrolled in this program and it encouraged a clearer intent and determination.

Things eventually settled down about half way through semester two and we ended up with a group of us who attended and participated consistently.

We learned a lot from the other people in our groups. We helped each other with understanding theory, or helped each other on common instruments, for example, singing harmonies, figuring out guitar or piano parts. Sometimes we tackled new instruments and got help from our group. It was inspiring to hear the ideas of others about how to arrange the music. It was also good to have the support of each other. The ensembles were mostly supportive environments where we could experiment and try new things. This helped to build confidence in

ourselves and created a sense of team work. Sometimes tempers would flare, but generally we were able to move past differences of opinion.

The class worked as a team to put on the final concerts in each semester. The second semester concert was of a much higher standard than the first semester show. Everyone improved a lot during the year and we raised our expectations of ourselves and our groups. From watching and critiquing each others' work in progress throughout the year, we came to better appreciate what a good quality performance looked like and how to execute that. Performing ABBA's "Money, Money, Money" in the final concert in semester two was a great moment for the class. We all came together and performed a really fun song and we did it well. It felt really good to come together as a class like that. This concert was a strong advertisement for music at USQ and it was well attended by family and friends.

The class and rehearsals—particularly working with the other students—helped many of us perform better. The experience helped develop some students on a personal level too, by building confidence. Because of the class many of us had new ideas about making music and about our personal roles as musicians. The experience gave some of us different ideas about how we might pursue a career in music.

The relationship between the overall story and the value indicators from student data can be seen in Figure 6. The community experienced the

fun, inspiration and challenges of working collaboratively and many influential connections were made (cycle 1). Interactions with others were motivating and built confidence, skills and trust (cycle 2). The skills of the community were applied in the end of semester concerts. This has been added as a new value indicator on the matrix (cycle 3). The overall community did not necessarily identify with the application of skills in other areas, or see the ability to leverage connections as a major part of its identity. The group did recognise improved performance as a part of its identity and it also acknowledged that improved performance in the form of the end of year concert promoted the university (cycle 4). Overall, the community improved performance standards and raised expectations of itself and its members (cycle 5) and participation caused the community to reframe ideas about participation in music as a career, formulating new definitions of success.

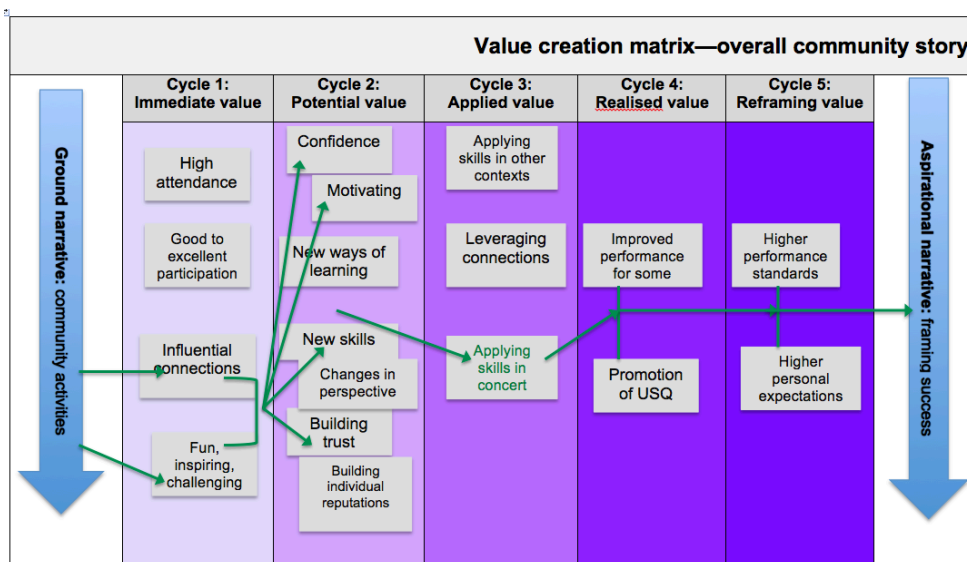


Figure 6—Value creation matrix for community (overall story)

7.2.3 Personal overall value creation story—Jack (student)

Jack’s story summarises his experiences throughout the year:

I've always made music on my own so it was quite a different experience to do these courses because I had to work with other musicians. When I started, the way I thought about music was very much solo thinking because this was what I was used to. However, it soon became clear that I would need to adjust the way I thought about music and the way I played to properly participate in this class.

In semester one, I worked a lot with another instrumentalist and this taught me a lot about how some people see music differently to me. She was very much a reader of music, but I approach things more intuitively. At times it was difficult to negotiate our different backgrounds, musical languages, interests and skill sets, but we managed to move beyond these challenges and I learned a lot along the way.

At times, especially in semester one, it was really frustrating to work with others who weren't committed to the process. The fact that a lot of people dropped out of the course didn't bother me. What did bother me was when members of the group continued to bicker endlessly about tardiness or disorganized members. I just always felt like I wanted the focus to be on the music, not on the group members who were missing, because it was simple enough to keep practising and making decisions without them. If people couldn't do that, then they shouldn't be in the class. When people left it was a chance to simply regroup and get back to the main point which was the business of making music.

I think being in these groups has helped my playing a lot, particularly the rudimental things. Before this, I focused on highly technical piano solos and compositions, trying to expand my skills. I had no skills in rudimental things or the ability to play pop songs on the spot from charts. Previously I would not have known what to play for a bass line on the piano, or how to voice chords to sound good in a pop song, but now I feel I can do these things with confidence and ease. I'm also better at playing in time and listening to other musicians in the group. These are things I was not able to do previously because I had always worked alone.

I still have a way to go in being a good communicator but in terms of talking to individual members and lecturers, I have improved quite a bit because of working in my groups.

I believe my standards about performance have been raised and I am better placed to meet these standards. The first semester concert was definitely below par, but the second semester concert was a vast improvement. I think during semester two we all realised that we could do much better. I've also learned that it's really important to do what is right by the music and that sometimes your own preferences or ideas must be sacrificed for the greater good.

I've tried new things. I've sung in the concerts and got help with singing from Gemma and Tamika. I've also started to play guitar with Shane and write songs. These things happened because working with the other students opened my eyes to the possibilities that music holds

for me. This wouldn't have happened if I'd continued to work alone.

Because of my experience, I have recommended the music program to others.

The relationship between Jack's story and the value indicators from student data can be seen in Figure 7. Jack placed particular value on being able to work with others, although this was challenging for him (cycle 1). His participation built confidence especially in relation to communication, motivated him, showed him a new way of learning from peers, gave him new skills and changed his perspective from music being a solo pursuit to a collaborative one (cycle 2). Jack applied these skills in other contexts and leveraged his class connections to try new things like song writing, singing and guitar (cycle 3). His self-assessment was that his practice improved and he has recommended the music program to others (cycle 4). His experiences led him to expect more from himself musically and to always serve the music in performance which is a re-evaluation of "what matters" (cycle 5). From participating in the ensembles, Jack was able to reframe what success means for him. Whilst Wenger et al. (2011) call for caution when seeking to establish causal links between community participation and improved performance, Jack himself clearly makes a connection between the two—but for his participation, he believes he would not have learned what he did, changed his perspective and developed into a better musician.

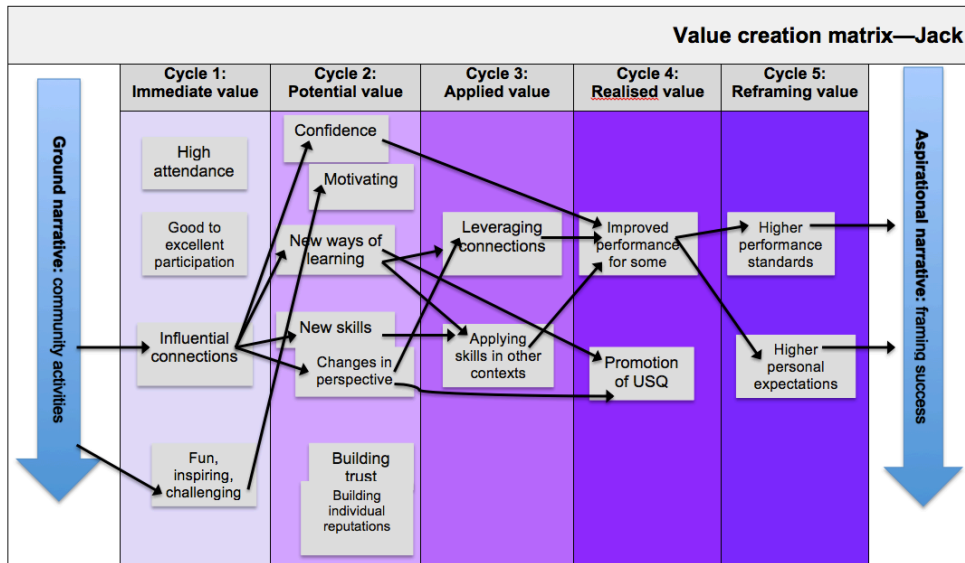


Figure 7—Value creation matrix for Jack (overall story)

7.2.4 Overall value creation story—Cate (student)

Cate’s story focuses on the connections she made with some of her peers:

I think the year was a mixed bag for me. Whilst I had a lot of fun working with the other students, I felt frustrated by my own inability to practice and improve vocally. I also felt somewhat inadequate compared to many of the others because I can’t play another instrument well enough to accompany myself or play well in a group. I did try on a few occasions to play keys, but from my perspective it really didn’t work.

Sometimes I would get annoyed with myself for being too over the top in performances, trying to cover up my lack of confidence and preparation with jokes and banter. I felt that my own attitude towards my individual contribution hindered my improvement to a certain degree. But I suppose realizing the importance of practice—which

definitely happened throughout the year—is a good thing in itself.

It was wonderful to have people like Hope help me with theory. I struggle with the theory side of things and Hope knows a lot, so she showed me how to put theory into practice. She was able to explain things to me in a way that helped me really understand the concept. In fact, the whole ensemble experience made me connect the dots between theory and practice better than I've ever been able to do before. This was a revelation! Maddie also demonstrated to me what it is like to work with another vocalist in a supportive way. I worked with both Maddie and Hope outside of class to write an original song and perform an 80s cover live on radio. I also helped out a primary school choir with two of my fellow students. I really enjoyed and learned, every minute I was with my fellow “ensemblists”!

Overall I would say that I did learn a lot from my experience but I'm still looking for that specific something—the magic bullet?!—to motivate me to work harder when I'm by myself to improve my vocal and keyboard skills. One thing I have realised is that by not practising I am not only letting myself down, but I'm letting down my ensemble and maybe that is the thing which will motivate me in the end.

The relationship between Cate's overall story and the value indicators from student data can be seen in Figure 8. Whilst many students found working in the ensembles motivating, Cate did not. Throughout the year, she struggled to find the motivation for personal practice. She also did not mention any improvement in her performance as a result of her

participation, apart from being able to see the relevance of theory to practice. She did, however, make some influential connections with some of her peers including Hope and Maddie (cycle 1). These connections helped her to develop new skills in music theory and singing vocal harmonies and recognise her peers as a valuable learning resource (cycle 2). She leveraged these connections to achieve things outside the learning community (cycle 3). Cate’s story does not cover the full range of cycles, however, value is still present, particularly in the form of the connections made between Cate and some of her peers.

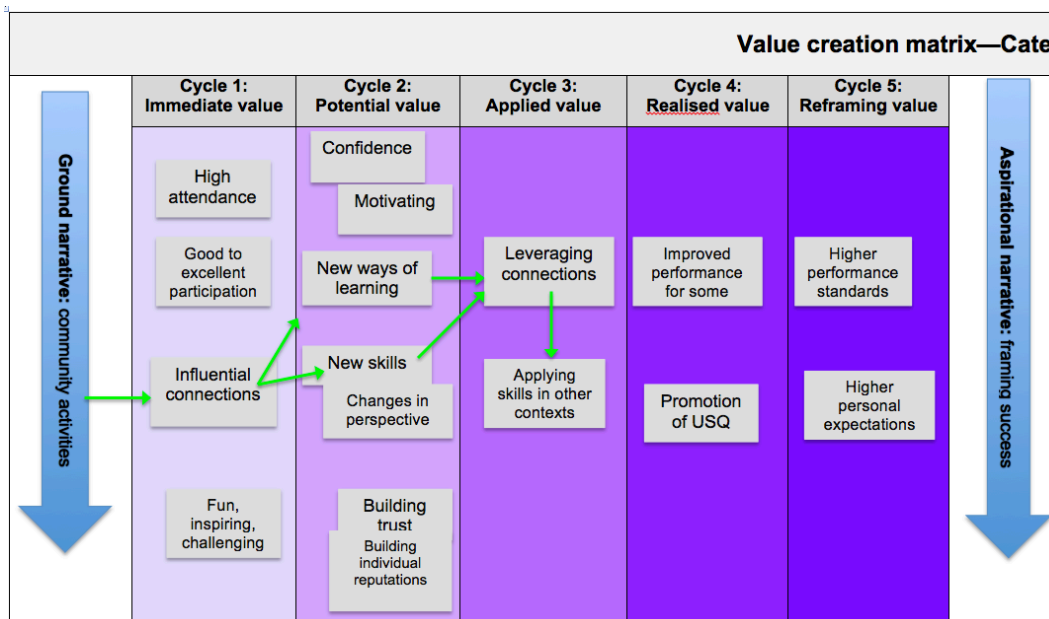


Figure 8—Value creation matrix for Cate (overall story)

7.3 Specific value creation stories

The following stories focus on specific examples of how participation created value. The typical sequence for these stories again mirrors the cycles of value creation. The stories begin with a meaningful event and examine what was gained from participating in that event (cycles 1 and 2).

Participants then discuss how the idea or skill gained was applied and the

outcome of that application (cycles 3 and 4). Finally, some stories may incorporate changes in defining what matters to the participant (cycle 5).

7.3.1 Specific value creations story—Maddie (student)

Maddie’s story focuses on a critical incident in her development when she sang the Kelly Clarkson song “Before your love” in the final concert:

In the last few years, I’ve really struggled with confidence but I cannot believe how much I have grown personally throughout this year. If I look back at the first performance for the year which was “Time after time”, I had absolutely no confidence, no direction of where I wanted to be, a tunnel vision when it came to music and my mindset was fixed. I don’t even want to talk about that!

The main thing which has helped build my confidence has been interacting with the other students. We had so much fun together in my groups and I became quite close to some of the others. I think it was working with the same people over a period of time, getting to know them, talking about the music and trying different things, which really helped to build my confidence.

There was one moment in the final concert where I felt all my experiences throughout the year really coming together. When I sang “Before your love” I actually got really connected to the song. When I introduced the song I was really nervous and my lack of confidence filled the room for a moment, but then I started singing and I felt like I had to make this song really powerful. I knew this song from previous

performances but I was never able to achieve the power and emotional attachment I had been aiming for. In this performance I felt like I did. Yes, I am still not 100% confident but that was honestly the best performance of that song that I have ever done. A lot of the time I try to fake my confidence and the connection I have with the music (because I am really worrying about how I look and what people are thinking) but this performance was a new step for me. At so many points I even closed my eyes because I was just feeling everything. The meaning of the text, the beauty of the accompaniment, the contour of the melody . . . it was just amazing. I wasn't worrying about hitting the high notes—I just let the music take over. At times throughout the song I could noticeably feel the weakness in my chest voice but for some reason I wasn't concerned about it. That experience made me “shift the goal posts” in terms of what I'm aiming for when I perform!

Being in an ensemble has definitely affected my personal and musical growth, allowing me to express my musical opinions but also explore new instruments, styles and musical characteristics. Being in an ensemble has allowed me to show my true characteristics which demonstrate leadership and problem solving, through being comfortable with myself and the people around me. I honestly think that I have matured so much, in relation to learning from others, accepting the feedback from others and even the fact that I am now able to realise what I need to improve, how to improve it and how much time I need to allow to become better, musically and mentally,

to achieve what I want to achieve. I have also very recently realised that being hard on myself is not productive and I now know to move on and try to improve instead of looking back and being disappointed. This year has already changed my life and I am so thankful for the people who have helped me to achieve what I have and become the person I am now (more) comfortable with. Bring on next year!

The relationship between Maddie's story and the value indicators from student data can be seen in Figure 9. She found the experience of working in ensembles extremely enjoyable and made some influential connections with her peers (cycle 1). The strongest theme running throughout Maddie's experience was increased confidence from working with her peers (cycle 2). She was highly motivated and developed new ways of learning and acquired new skills (cycle 2). She also experienced a change in perspective on both personal and musical fronts (cycle 2). All of these factors led to an improvement in her performance, which is evidenced by her specific experience of singing "Before your love" at the concert (cycle 4). Maddie engaged in critical self-reflection as a result of her experience. She gained confidence, realised she was capable of emotional connection when performing, understood better the amount of work she needed to do to succeed and experienced personal growth by recognising destructive thought patterns (cycle 5).

As was the case with Jack, Maddie perceived a causal link between her participation in the learning community and improvements in her performance. Maddie's story also demonstrates a causal link between her participation and increased confidence, which contributed to improved

performance. Maddie’s story does not directly mention the applied value indicators of leveraging connections and applying skills in other contexts, however, Maddie does experience applied value, because her participation has made a great deal of difference to her practice (Wenger et al., 2011).

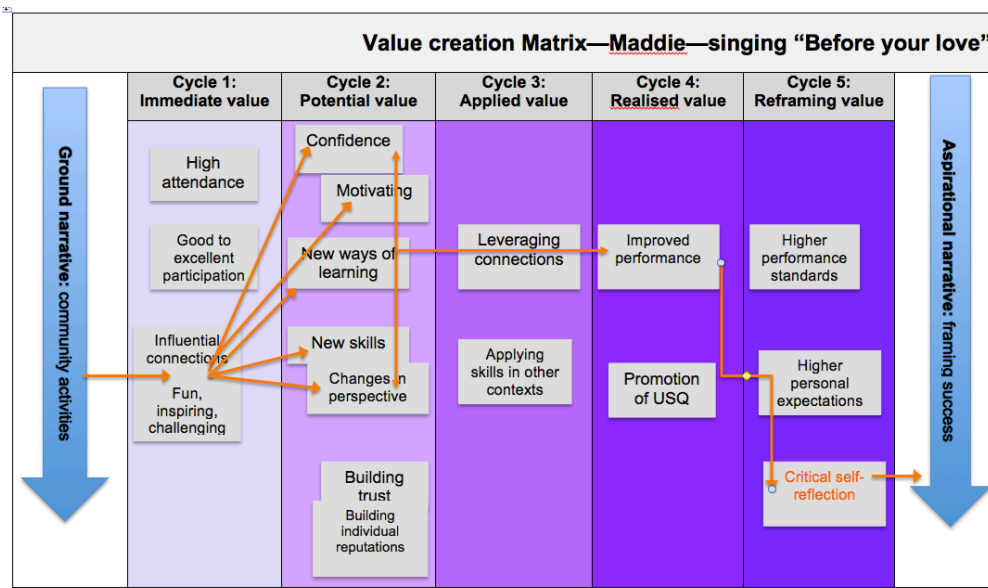


Figure 9—Value creation matrix for Maddie (specific story)

7.3.2 Specific value creation story—Melissa (teacher)

The following story shows how connections made between me and some of the students were leveraged to promote the students themselves and the music program at USQ:

In semester two, one of the tasks the students worked on was an acoustic cover version of an 80s pop song. Cate, Hope, Maddie and John decided to do “We Belong” by Pat Benatar. They came up with a very creative interpretation of the song. Cate and Maddie sang in harmony, Hope played an ostinato line on the cello and John played rock box. At the end of the song, they all sang the chorus in four-part harmony. It was really wonderful. I think the lyrics of the song

resonated with all of us. It was the moment, at least for me, when I felt that we had finally come together as a class.

Soon after, I was approached by the marketing manager of Artsworx, USQ's production house, about whether I could suggest a student group for a live radio performance. Coincidentally, the radio station ran a weekly feature of an artist doing an 80s cover! I immediately suggested Cate's group and when I asked them if they were keen, they leapt at the opportunity.

As a teacher, it was wonderful to realise that I now had a number of student groups which I could put forward for opportunities such as these. The class had produced a number of successful student ensembles, all of whom I felt confident could be great ambassadors for the music program.

In the lead up to the performance, the radio station requested that the group also perform an original song, so the group collaborated and wrote a great song called "I Believe".

On the day, John wasn't well but the other three students performed anyway. It was a great hit at the radio station and the students got ample opportunity to talk about their experiences of learning music at USQ. The radio station put a live recording of the performance on their Facebook page and it received some wonderful feedback.

The relationship between my story and the value indicators from student data can be seen in Figure 10. Influential connections were at play in

this story, both between the students as a group and between them and me as teacher (cycle 1). The classes had created a new tangible resource which was the ensembles themselves, each with their own characteristics and strengths. A new value indicator has been added to Figure 10 in cycle 2 to represent this new resource. The students did not view their ensembles as tangible resources, but as teacher, I did. I am asked regularly to suggest student groups for university and community events and these groups are a very real resource for me. My access to this new resource was leveraged (cycle 3) to promote the students themselves and also the music program they were enrolled in (cycle 4). For the university, promoting the music program to the broader public created reputational capital.

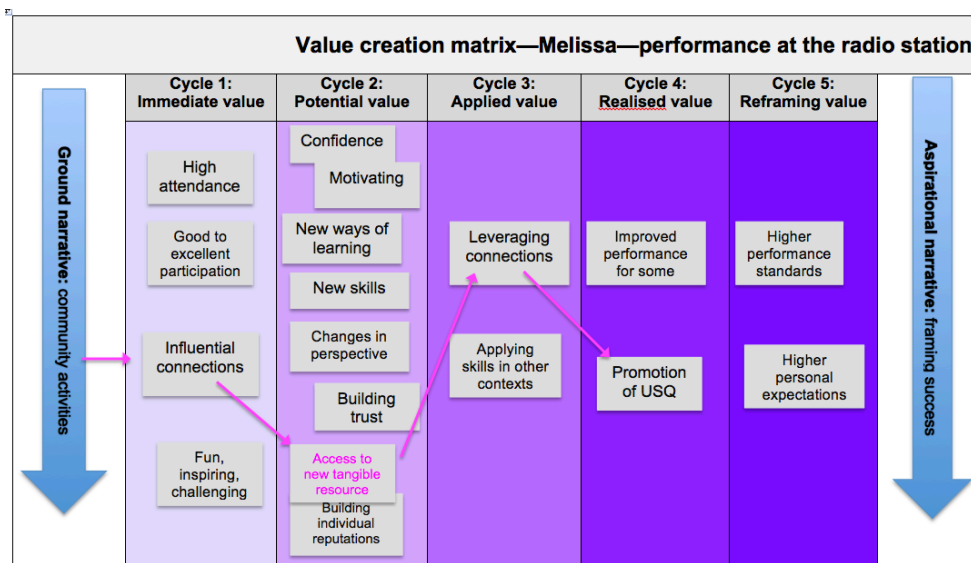


Figure 10—Value creation matrix for teacher (specific story)

7.3.3 Specific value creation story—Shane (student)

Shane had some challenging encounters with a student in his group in semester two:

There were a few incidents where personalities clashed in rehearsals

and this was a very challenging period for me. I really doubted why I was at uni during that time.

At one particular rehearsal, the negativity from one member got so bad that I walked out of the rehearsal and didn't come back. I was pretty gutted by this as I felt I had tried to support this person, but they were really challenging me that day with their negative attitude. It had a pretty bad impact on the others in the group too. Previously when these things had happened I would try to broker some kind of peace deal between the parties but this time I was involved directly and I felt really defeated. I even thought about dropping out of the course.

After I reflected on this incident I realised how much I let my emotions take over. I wish I could have dealt with it differently but I've now accepted where I was at the time. It impacted me in lots of ways and meant that in some cases I didn't deliver work that I'd promised to do. It really rocked my confidence for a while. But then I resolved to work even harder, so that any attacks on my skills could be met with the knowledge that I worked hard and tried my best. I also resolved that if this sort of thing happened again, I would quietly take the person aside and try to have a calm discussion with them about the impact of their words on me and the others.

Whilst it was a pretty stressful experience, in some ways I'm glad it happened. I learnt what not to do in these situations and I made a plan for how I would handle it in future. If it happens again, I think I'll be better prepared.

The relationship between Shane’s story and the value indicators from student data can be seen Figure 11. The framework makes it clear that experiences within a community can be positive or negative, but still hold value for participants. Whilst Shane chose to focus on a negative encounter with a fellow student, this incident created value for him. The connection with the other student was influential on Shane’s development, albeit challenging (cycle 1). The encounter changed his perspective and his reflection upon it gave him the confidence to face a similar situation in the future (cycle 2). Shane leveraged this connection to help him reflect upon his own behaviour (cycle 3). Through critical reflection, Shane also demonstrated a reframing of how he might successfully negotiate such a situation in future (cycle 5).

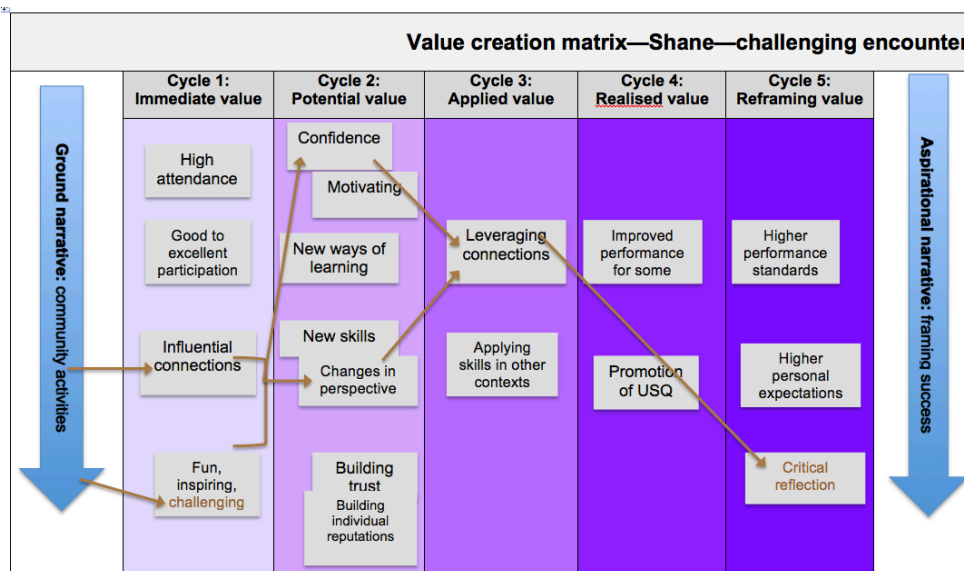


Figure 11—Value creation matrix for Shane (specific story)

7.4 Chapter summary

Wenger et al. (2011) note that the process of corroboration or contradiction of indicators and stories could go on ad infinitum, “...discovering salient indicators, which point to stories that need to be collected, which in turn point to elements that are promising for use as indicators, which suggest new stories” (p. 40). If different stories were included here, another picture might well emerge. However, as previously discussed, it is not the purpose of this study to present a definitive version of the events of 2014. Rather, these stories and the value indicators are intended to capture some of the experienced value and challenges of participants in collaborative learning.

The 2014 learning community created value for participants across the entire range of cycles. The simple ground narrative of the community was that we had come together to teach and learn music practice. Participation had immediate value because it was fun, inspiring and challenging. Valuable connections were formed variously amongst all participants. Potential value was created because participation built our confidence and motivation. We recognized new ways to learn, learned new skills, changed our perspectives and built trust amongst each other as well as our reputations. We created a new tangible resource in the student ensembles. Our connections were leveraged to achieve things outside of the community, including the promotion of the university. Students applied the skills they had acquired within the community when performing in the concerts and also recognized that they were applying these skills beyond the community. Because of my experience, I created a new tangible asset, the

course “Preparing for success in music”. Value was realized in that select students and the community as a whole recognized an improvement in performance, which led to a reframing of performance standards and individual expectations. Some students and I engaged in critical reflection on our practice. The aspirational narrative became one in which we could see the potential for the learning community to transform us as students, musicians, teachers and people.

In a personal communication between student Mark and myself about the overall community story, he noted that participation in the community was “a chance to recognise and affirm that we are passionate enough about this path to study it at the tertiary level and embark upon a pivotal journey into the self in the process” (personal communication, 7 August, 2015). Throughout the process of assessing the value of the community, the link between the development of the musician and the person through interaction with others was inextricable. Music education research which traditionally focuses on musical outcomes at the expense of students’ experiences (Karlsen, 2011; Westerlund, 2008) potentially ignores the value music education holds for students’ personal development. It is of interest to note that only Jack’s story actually captures his sense of becoming a better musician. For Maddie, her performance improved, but the main focus was on her own self-development and burgeoning self-awareness. In Shane’s story, the focus was on developing inter-personal communication. Cate did not feel that she had taken enough personal responsibility to improve musically, although she did speak of a growing awareness of what was required to achieve that. The significance of the stories in the context of

musical outcomes is that, for some students, musical outcomes were not prominent when reflecting on their year of learning.

Before turning to a discussion of the findings on both agency and value creation, as a preliminary observation, the findings in relation to value creation, although phrased in different terms, support the findings regarding agency, particularly in relation to the value for students of peer relationships to learning. Whilst the data used to assess value indicators—student short answer questionnaires—were guided through the asking of questions, the essay and reflective journal data used to explore agency were only generally guided.⁴⁶ Students’ own largely unprompted reflections triangulated the guided questionnaire data, in that events and experiences were corroborated (Webster & Mertova, 2007). This triangulation, in addition to the other factors outlined in Section 4.3 “Credibility framework”, supports the credibility of these findings. The following chapter discusses the findings in detail and uses them as a source for paradigm reflection on the means and ends of HME in the USQ context.

⁴⁶ See discussion in Section 4.2.2 “Student essays and journals”

Chapter 8. Discussion

The previous three chapters presented the findings of this study. The aim was to better understand the complexities of collaborative learning in this context by discovering participants' experiences of it. Chapter 5 demonstrated that participating in collaborative learning built students' individual and collective agency. Chapters 6 and 7 described the value created for the participants by identifying indicators of value and telling value creation stories. These results revealed that value was created in a number of ways and across the full range of value creation cycles for both the students and for me as teacher.

During this chapter I return to the metaphor from the title of this study, "playing the changes". This metaphor is used to highlight certain aspects of the results. This chapter begins with a discussion of the findings in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 and provides answers to research questions 1 and 2 relating to students' agency and value creation respectively. I then discuss those results to answer the final research question, "In light of the answers to questions 1 and 2, in what ways did participants' experiences of collaborative learning contribute towards an expanded view of the means and ends of HME at USQ?" This research question encompasses one of the central concerns of practitioner inquiry, which is to problematize the ends question of education (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). In answering this question, I engage in paradigm reflection (Sloboda, 2011) and re-examine the very nature of the educational means and ends in this context.

8.1 Musical agency

To answer the research question “How did participation in collaborative learning for music practice build students’ individual and collective agency?” I conducted a thematic analysis of students’ journals and essays. This analysis revealed three primary themes. Two themes were relevant to individual agency and related to how and what students learned. The third theme was “developing a shared focus”, which related to building agency at the collective level.

8.1.1 Individual agency

Due to its emphasis on informal interactions between heterogeneous peers, participation in the collaborative learning environment built students’ individual musical and personal agency through the ways in which they learned and what they learned. By developing music-related skills within a collaborative setting, students were able to explore their individual identities, access learning experiences and in some cases experience shifts in identity and personal transformation. Social interactions were the primary vehicle through which these aspects of individual agency were built. This was also true of the lessons actually learned by students—whilst students learned musical skills, many of their reflections focused on personal breakthroughs, insights, heightened self-awareness and transformative experiences which occurred as a result of social interactions with their peers.

In terms of *how* they learned, students’ reflections focused primarily on learning from their peers. Within this peer-to-peer learning and teaching

framework, the heterogeneous nature of the groups was a distinct asset to learning. This heterogeneity caused many students to learn through the cognitive conflict they experienced when working with others who were more or less skilled, more or less experienced, who played different instruments or sang and who were from different backgrounds with varied interests. Students' capacity to act—their musical agency—was enhanced through access to learning experiences provided by peer group heterogeneity. Beyond simply learning from each other, some students formed relationships which had a significant impact on their musical and personal development. Many students reflected on reframing negative experiences into learning experiences, again increasing their agency through access to unique learning experiences.

Just as heterogeneity—of instruments, musicians' temperaments and styles, rhythmic feels, harmonic structures—is a hallmark of much jazz improvisation, so too, is it a defining characteristic of these students' experiences. It is a somewhat unwritten tenet of learning jazz that young musicians seek out more experienced players to play with and learn from. Chapter 5 described how certain students were able to overcome social comparison concern and learn from differences. This is not unlike the learning that takes place on the jazz bandstand which is populated by both novices and experts. Students were able to metaphorically play the changes within their ensembles—which also changed throughout the year—connecting with different students, all the while accessing new learning experiences with each relationship formed. Within a traditional educational paradigm, the teacher would be seen as the expert, however, within

collaborative learning in this context, the notion of expertise was subordinate to learning from interactions with peers different to oneself.

Students also played the changes with respect to *what* they were learning. On a musical level, these learning outcomes ranged from developing music-related skills and learning the basics, learning the importance of personal practice (see also Virkkula, 2015) and the relevance of theory to practice and using musical limitations to find creative solutions. All of these musical lessons are again similar to that of a jazz musician learning to play the changes—without the basics of scales and arpeggios, a jazz improviser does not have the basic vocabulary to begin to communicate with other musicians or to speak the jazz language. This can only be gained through personal practice. As with any good conversationalist, skilled jazz improvisers are constantly discovering creative solutions to make their improvised lines work.

At a personal level, the data revealed that students became more adept at communicating and in some cases experienced increased self-awareness and transformation. It would not be overstating matters to conclude that Shane, Maddie, Jack and to a lesser extent Gemma and Mark—50% of the participant pool—experienced significant shifts in their identities as a result of developing music-related skills.⁴⁷ Whilst historically it has been common to acknowledge the impact music and music participation can have on

⁴⁷ For details, see, for example, Sections 5.4.1 (Gemma), 7.2.3 (Jack), 7.3.1 (Maddie) and 7.3.3 (Shane), 7.4 (Mark)

identity (Mark, 2002), this notion has fallen out of vogue with the rise of the aesthetic movement in music education. This is paradoxical, given the advances in learning theory and educational psychology which view the shaping of identity as education's core business (e.g. Wenger, 1998). Moreover, particularly in the case of Shane, the shift in identity was not accompanied by a sense of increased musical artistry. Rather, Shane realised how much work he had to do if he wanted to achieve his aesthetic ideals. Shane also realised that his personal background had disadvantaged him significantly in achieving his personal goals. This helped him accept his current skill level and motivated him to work harder. Shane's case demonstrates that his educational experience was of value to him primarily on a personal, non-musical basis. Maddie's case was similar. Her experiences were transformational, as she grew in confidence and used her participation to reshape her identity as a performer who was capable of much more than she had previously believed. Musical development did not loom as large in her experience as did personal development. Maddie's journey throughout the year was an emotional one, as she battled her own lack of self-confidence. Her final performance of "Before Your Love" was a transformative moment, as she reconnected with her potential as a singer.

Maddie and Shane extracted the value *they needed* from their educational experience at the time. Whilst wishing to do well in their assessments, they seemed aware at least on an intuitive level that their music education was about more than good grades or being the best player or singer. They are excellent examples of *learning improvisers* in the sense that they improvised their own learning—such students play the changes

within their learning environment and respond in ways which build their capacity to act, *as suits their needs*. Again, the heterogeneity of such an environment provides students with access to many and varied learning experiences, enabling them to choose from these experiences and gravitate intuitively towards the lessons they need to learn.

8.1.2 Collective agency

Participation in collaborative learning built students' collective agency through establishing a basis for collaborative musical action. Karlsen (2011) notes that "collaborative musical action nicely sums up all the . . . aspects of musical agency on the collective level" (p. 117). Through establishing a basis for collaborative musical action and collectively agreeing on musical goals, students experienced new ways of "knowing the world" (Karlsen, 2011, p. 116) and explored and affirmed collective identity.

For many students it was their first experience of working collaboratively. This meant they were able to know the world through collaborative musical action in a way previously unavailable to them. Students' reflections showed a genuine concern and respect for the collective identity of their groups. They were willing to negotiate around individual and collective needs. Having explored collective identity through the process of unsupervised rehearsals and supervised workshops, students then affirmed the identity of their groups through public performances. Working in small teams towards the shared goal of performance in the end of semester concerts saw students negotiate shared practices, experience being part of a joint enterprise and feel a sense of pride and achievement in

the class as a whole (see also Virkkula, 2015). This shared focus of the small groups and the class engendered a sense of community. The process of negotiation required when working with others in order to collectively agree on musical goals enabled students' to build collective agency. As with individual agency, the building, negotiation and maintenance of social relationships and the ability to view these relationships as learning resources—even subconsciously—was key to building agency at the collective level.

8.1.3 Summary

These findings demonstrate that the defining feature of the collaborative learning environment for the 2014 cohort—working together in small heterogeneous groups for musical collaboration—was its key strength and learning resource and the primary vehicle for increasing students' individual and collective agency. It was through peer-to-peer interaction that learning principally took place. These findings are supported by Wenger's (1998) social theory of learning. Students clearly identified that they learned through social participation. The findings support that this learning was comprised of four components, as identified by Wenger—learning as community, practice, meaning and identity. The exploration and affirmation of collective identity and establishing a basis for collaborative musical action—activities which built collective agency—demonstrated that students experienced learning through a sense of belonging to a community. Students learned through practice and this practice was comprised mostly of the work they did together in their ensembles. Students' experiences also demonstrated meaning as a component of learning through social

participation—their experiences contain significant shifts in the way they saw themselves and their place within music as a result of interacting with their peers. In a number of cases, students learning with each other involved learning about identity—Wenger classifies this facet of learning as “learning as becoming” (Wenger, 1998, p. 5). These students came to know themselves in deeper, different and enlightening ways—they became in some respects different people. The students of 2014 established themselves as a learning community, at the very heart of which was learning through social participation which increased students’ individual and collective agency.

8.2 Value creation

To answer the research question “In what ways did collaborative learning for music practice create value for participants and other stakeholders?” I used the conceptual framework by Wenger et al. (2011) as a tool to gather and analyse data. Data from students’ short answers to questionnaires and other sources were collected and analysed to establish indicators of value. Narrative analysis of the entire data set—framework data, the teacher/researcher diary and students’ essays and journals—was undertaken to write value creation stories. Combining these two types of data results in a value creation matrix. The following section summarizes the findings from Chapters 6 and 7 and presents two final value creation matrices—one for students and one for me as teacher.

8.2.1 Value creation matrices

By leveraging the complementarity of the types of data—value indicators and value creation stories—indicators substantiate stories and stories give life to indicators (Wenger et al., 2011). The accumulation of indicators and stories is represented as a value-creation matrix. The matrix represents the final assessment of value created and is designed to be of interest to a wide range of stakeholders, from community participants to community sponsors and, in this instance, it is hoped, to the broader community of tertiary music educators. The process of applying the framework to the 2014 learning community was one of increasing levels of abstractions—the data were analysed, (re)presented as value indicators and (re)storied as value creation stories, interpreted to develop cycle-specific exemplars, then finally fashioned into value creation matrices, which are conceptual models of the value created in this context (Creswell, 2013). The final result is a conceptual model of participants' experiences mediated by my interpretation.

Developing an assessment of the value created by a community results in an increasingly complex matrix (Wenger et al., 2011). Because of this, I have chosen to present two separate final value creation matrices. Figure 12 is the value creation matrix for students' experiences and Figure 13 represents my experience as teacher. Building on the initial matrix of value indicators from Chapter 5, the final matrix for students shows some additional indicators of value discovered through the students' value creation stories. Furthermore, the student matrix has been simplified to avoid an overly confusing representation—one pathway for each student

story through the cycles of value creation was chosen. The value creation matrix for me as teacher also contains some additional indicators. Whilst a learning community does not need to reach the final cycle 5 of value creation to be successful (Wenger et al., 2011) the matrices show that there was significant reframing value for both the community overall and for a number of individual participants.

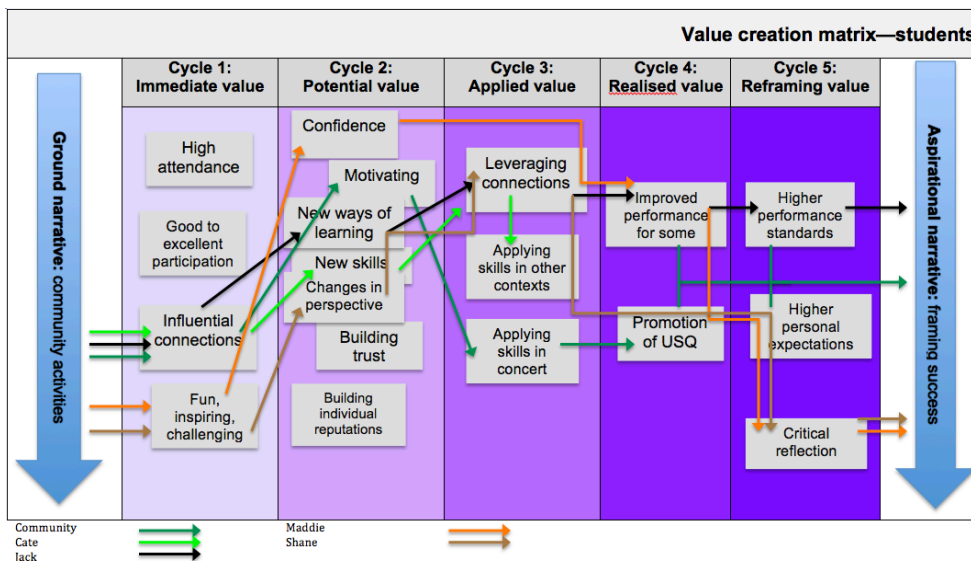


Figure 12—Final value creation matrix for students

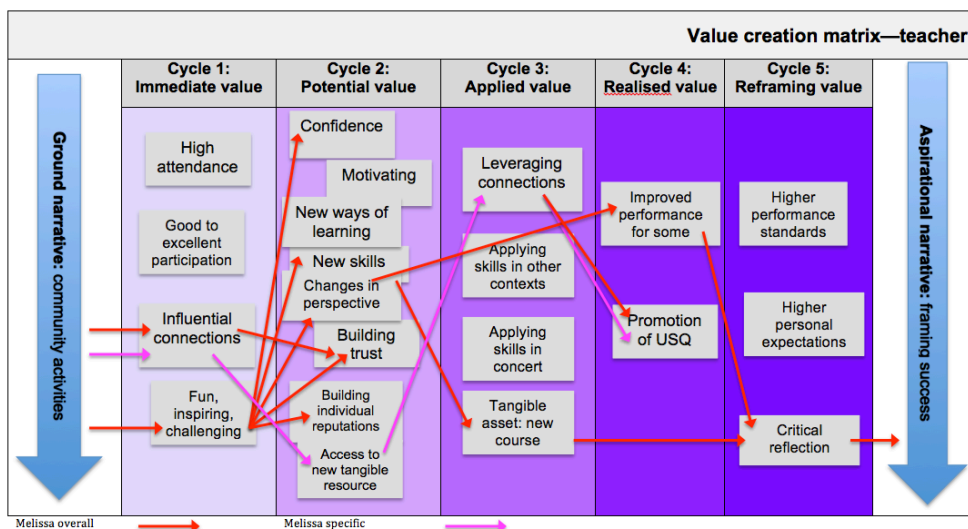


Figure 13—Final value creation matrix for teacher

Most of the value indicators present in the student survey data, to varying extents, feature in the value creation stories above. However, two indicators were not substantiated by any value creation stories—*high attendance* and *good to excellent participation* in cycle 1.⁴⁸ In fact, a number of the stories contradict them, in that they focus on students dropping out or participating in less than helpful ways, for example, my story and the stories from Jack and Shane. Whilst the quantitative data showed the attendance was high, this is not necessarily how participants experienced it. As teacher, I was actually quite surprised to review the attendance records for semester one, because my personal experience was that attendance was poor and it was a constant battle to engage a number of the students. The learning community was somewhat plagued by these issues in semester one, so it is imperative to acknowledge them as significant challenges. One exception to this is contained within the collective story of the learning community:

Students leaving caused some of us who remained to ponder a little more deeply about our own reasons and motivations for studying music. For some of us, it provoked a good internal conversation and honesty with ourselves about why we were enrolled in this program and it encouraged a clearer intent and determination.

Some students were able to use others' departures as an opportunity for

⁴⁸ Whilst *building trust* and *building individual reputations* were not substantiated by student stories, they are salient to my stories as teacher.

reflection on their own participation and motivations.

Because the data for this study is drawn from participants who completed the entire year, the stories of those students who left the courses and their reasons for doing so, remain silent and unarticulated. If data were available from students who left or who did not engage well in the courses, the findings on experiences of attendance and participation may be different to those summarised in the value indicators for cycle 1. Despite these complexities, the students who completed the surveys still rated the participation from good to excellent in cycle 1. Because survey data and attendance records support the participation and attendance indicators, they remain in the overall value creation matrices as indicators of value. They are, however, merely proxies of value creation, uncorroborated by value creation stories.

In Chapter 6 I argued that the use of the framework furthered the aim of this study by framing results in such a way as to be of interest not just to community participants, but to a broad range of stakeholders. As this was one of the primary rationales for using the framework, the following section discusses the results summarized in the final value creation matrices with respect to the various stakeholders identified in Chapter 6, Section 6.1.1, “Value to whom?”

8.2.2 Value for students

The following section discusses Figure 12, the value creation matrix for students. Participation created immediate value for students. The primary activity which created immediate value was organizing and

participating in unsupervised rehearsals with peers. All the challenges experienced by students—negotiating differing levels of ability/previous experience, scheduling rehearsals, losing group members, learning to play different styles of music, feeling comfortable working with others, getting to know each other and applying theory to practice—occurred primarily during or in connection with these rehearsals. Rehearsals were also fun and inspiring and the main setting for forming relationships with peers. These influential connections are another indicator of immediate value. Reading the indicators and stories as whole for cycle 1, the common thread through the creation of immediate value is working with peers in rehearsals. Given that these rehearsals were in many respects challenging for students, it is not surprising that the indicators of high attendance and participation do not feature—or feature negatively—in the value creation stories.

Participation also created potential value for students in the form of knowledge capital, the value of which lies in its potential to be realised at some later time (Wenger et al., 2011). Knowledge capital was created in the forms of human capital, social capital and learning capital (Wenger et al., 2011). There was insufficient evidence to support the creation of tangible and reputational capital. Human capital was created when students experienced increased confidence and found working with peers motivating and inspiring. Furthermore, through developing musical skills and experiencing changes in perspective, students created new personal assets, adding to human capital. As previously emphasised in this chapter, the relationships formed between peers were another source of value creation in the form of social capital.

Collaborative learning created potential value for students—knowledge capital—in the form of learning capital. This study has contextualized collaborative learning as relatively novel in HME. Students who experienced this context as a new way of learning built learning and therefore knowledge capital, in that they transformed their ability to learn the practical aspects of music through collaboration. Again, this demonstrates that peers were a very valuable learning resource for students. Students take these learning experiences with them as personal assets when they complete the courses and with them their potential for realisation at some future time. The value of such learning experiences thus extends beyond the temporal and geographical boundaries of the learning community.

In addition to its potential value, students leveraged this knowledge capital within the immediate context to create changes in practice—participation created applied value. Students applied the skills they had developed through their participation in the public performances in each semester. Some students also used the connections made in the class to achieve things beyond the learning community. Realized value is created when knowledge capital is applied, resulting in improved performance (Wenger et al., 2011). Jack and Maddie identified improved performance in their stories, as did a number of other students, however, this was not a universal experience. Shane and Cate both expressed some frustration with their performance, but demonstrated an awareness of how to improve. Reframing value was also evident and a feature of the collective story, meaning that at individual and collective levels, collaborative learning

caused “a reconsideration of the learning imperatives and the criteria by which success is defined” (Wenger et al., 2011, p. 21). The class set higher performance standards and personal expectations. Some engaged in critical reflection on their own practice.

The common source of value creation for students, particularly in the first three cycles, is peer relationships. All the indicators and value creation stories in cycles 1–3 have peer-based social relationships at their source. In later cycles, value tends to spring from taking personal responsibility for leveraging learning experiences in earlier cycles, realizing that value and reflecting at both the individual and collective level on definitions of success. These findings again support Wenger’s (1998) social theory of learning, just as the findings on agency confirm that learning in this context was an intensely social endeavour.

8.2.3 Value for the teacher

The value creation matrix demonstrates that I experienced value through all five cycles. Much of the detail in relation to each cycle was discussed in Chapter 7. Here, I simply wish to convey that for me, the experience of participating in and researching collaborative learning with the 2014 cohort challenged and changed me in significant ways. Where the researcher participates alongside the researched in narrative inquiry, Barrett and Stauffer (2009b) identify the potential for the research relationship to change the researcher: “narrative inquiry becomes to varying degrees a study of self, of self alongside others, as well as of the inquiry participants and their experience of the world” (p. 12).

Whilst always mindful of maintaining the focus on students' experiences throughout this study, it has also been a study of self for me as teacher/researcher. Reflecting on the journey from my ground narrative towards my aspirational narrative, I am now aware that, through a process of creative and improvised teaching, I reconsidered learning imperatives and the criteria for learning success (Wenger et al., 2011). I reframed my role as teacher. As the teacher within collaborative learning, I surrendered my position as holding the authority of knowledge and power (Bruffee, 1999). This process of surrender can at times be uncomfortable, particularly if one's own education and ingrained beliefs stem from an authoritarian and transmission model of education, as was most of my own educational experience. This reframing value caused me to re-evaluate both the means and ends of HME in this context. I discuss the resulting expanded view of HME later in this chapter.

As the teacher and one who has lead the cultivation of the community, the results have potential to provide me with information to make decisions about how to shape the community and how to maximise value for future cohorts and for institutional stakeholders (Wenger et al., 2011). The findings in this study have confirmed my intuition that students benefit greatly from being given a degree of autonomy to work within heterogeneous peer groups towards collective goals. If anything, in future iterations of the course, I believe some freedom for students to choose groups in semester two may be worth considering, but this will depend on the cohort—some cohorts are naturally more independently inclined than others. There may also potentially be ways to create tangible resources from

future learning communities such as promotional videos, lead sheet libraries and course wikis on tips and tricks from previous cohorts. The intervention studied by Micari and Pazos (2014) to have student mentors visit first year classes to address the issue of social comparison concern is another possibility for the future shape of the courses, however, students in this study demonstrated an ability to reframe this concern for learning purposes. In summary, the findings for me as teacher confirm that collaborative learning is valuable in this context for teachers and students and that, with slight variations, those benefits can be refined for future cohorts. My critical reflection on these issues is presented later in this chapter, where I connect the value created for me as teacher with an expansion of learning and teaching practice and increased teacher agency.

8.2.4 Value for USQ

As noted in Chapter 6, for university leaders and financiers, the findings should ideally demonstrate that the learning community aligns strategically with institutional objectives and is worthy of continued resourcing and support (Wenger et al., 2011). Personalised and life-long learning are central tenets of USQ's learning and teaching strategy. The findings demonstrate that the learning community supports personalised learning. As discussed earlier in this chapter, a number of students embarked on highly personalised journeys through the music practice courses during 2014. The findings in relation to individual agency also strongly support the contention that collaborative learning enables personalised learning. To establish whether students' experiences of collaborative learning during 2014 inspired life-long learning, a longitudinal

study would be required.⁴⁹ As an initial observation, however, progression to second year for the cohort was strong, with nine out of the ten students in this study continuing their university music studies into second year. The data also indicated that value was created for USQ through students' willingness to speak positively about their experiences and promote the university through musical activities.

8.2.5 Value for music educators

Practitioner research creates knowledge from practice on practice and findings should be publicly available and transparent to other practitioners, so they may also benefit from the insights gained (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Perhaps the primary value created for other practitioners is the insight into experiences of collaborative learning provided by this study. This study has demonstrated that collaborative learning in this context was a practical and philosophically informed response to the various systemic, institutional and cultural challenges of delivering HME within today's rapidly changing educational landscape. Collaborative learning may be a viable option for other practitioners seeking to also respond to these challenges. Moreover, this study has demonstrated that collaborative learning can be an expansive process for students both musically and personally, increasing individual agency and creating many different types of value. Collaborative learning is furthermore a valuable source for professional and paradigm reflection practice for the teacher. Perhaps my

⁴⁹ Chapter 9 contains suggestions for further research.

own reflection (see Section 8.3 below) may contain for other practitioners the kernels of ideas on ways in which they can question commonplaces (Jorgensen, 2003b), trouble certainty (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009) and engage in constructive disruption (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) within their own practice and institutions. Specific implications for practice are discussed in Chapter 9. As a general comment, however, it is hoped that detailing our experiences of collaborative learning illuminates the process to other practitioners and prompts them to consider the role collaborative learning might play in their own practice.

8.2.6 Challenges of using the framework

There are many advantages to using the framework by Wenger et al. (2011) to assess and promote value. The framework enables a very detailed, nuanced picture to emerge of value creation, across a range of different cycles. It provides a clear guide, including templates and questions, to assist narrative researchers who wish to explore social learning. Furthermore, as described above, the framework can be used to demonstrate value to a range of different stakeholders, not just to participants.

The use of the framework does, however, present some challenges. Similar to Booth and Kellogg (2014), at times I found it difficult to classify data as falling within a specific cycle. This was particularly so in relation to the value indicators *changes in perspective* in cycle 2 and *aspects of performance* or *achieving something new* in cycle 4. A change in perspective may affect performance resulting in realized value—cycle 4—but it also has the ongoing potential to yield value in the future and is

therefore of potential value—cycle 2. I agree with Booth and Kellogg that the cycles are easily understood at the conceptual level, but more difficult to apply to data. On the other hand, simply identifying value creation is in itself valuable, regardless of whether it can be strictly classified in accordance with the framework's taxonomy of cycles of value creation.

Whilst Booth and Kellogg (2014)⁵⁰ did not find the framework effective at capturing value at the higher levels of realized and reframing value (cycles 4 and 5), this value was captured in this study. Four of the five student value creation stories corroborated value indicators in cycles 4 and 5, as did my stories as teacher and the collective story. Reaching the higher levels of value creation is not proof of the success of the learning community (Wenger et al., 2011). However, it should be of interest to all stakeholders that participation indicated improved performance and that a number of participants and the learning community itself reframed what success meant to them as a result of critical reflection on their experiences.

One area I found particularly challenging when applying the framework was understanding the concept and role of proxies in assessing value creation. Proxies are indicators which, when viewed in isolation, are effectively only indicative, rather than proof of value creation (Wenger et al., 2011). Essentially, Wenger et al. (2011) explain that without further corroborating evidence in the form of value creation stories, proxies lead to assumptions regarding value—presenting too many indicators without

⁵⁰ See also Pataraiia (2014)

stories relies on too many assumptions. Yet Wenger et al. also acknowledge that because a thorough assessment of value creation is time-intensive, it is sometimes more practical to simply rely on proxies than to seek further evidence to provide certainty. The framework is presented as a research tool capable of yielding reliable and valid results. The use of terms such as reliability and validity seems at odds with the predominantly narrative research approach in the framework and with the statement that at times proxies alone may be sufficient to establish value. In order to ensure the integrity of an investigation using the framework, a caution against reliance on proxies could be more strongly articulated and the research approach stated clearly as being narrative in nature, so that the results can be viewed within an appropriate framework for assessment.

In Chapter 6, I identified that the challenges of participation were strongly present in the data, but that these challenges were cast in a positive light and seen as learning opportunities. Because challenges were identified early on by students as a significant carrier of learning value, I suggest that they be included in the framework as an indicator of immediate value for participants. Of course, viewing challenges as an opportunity for growth rather than an impediment depends on the mindset of participants (Dweck, 2008). Identifying and discussing the challenges of participation could create an excellent learning opportunity for teachers, by raising the concept of growth and fixed mindsets and the impact that mindset has on learning (Dweck, 2008).

Booth and Kellogg (2014) comment that collecting, analyzing and presenting value creation stories is time-intensive and that it may not be a

practical way to assess value for busy practitioners. My experience using the framework confirms that it is quite time-consuming, but well-suited to an extended research project such as this study. Wenger et al. (2011) themselves acknowledge that the collection of data and telling of stories could go on ad infinitum and that it is a matter of judgment and context as to how much evidence is sufficient. Depending on context, even one strategically chosen value creation story, coupled with value indicators, could be sufficient to mount a persuasive case to a sponsoring organization for increased funding. Whilst the process is time consuming, I believe it could be tailored to suit individual needs, contexts and purposes.

Despite the challenges outlined above, the framework was an extremely useful tool for collecting and analysing data and presenting findings in a succinct manner in the format of the value creation matrix. The capacity of the framework to distil the complexities of experience into a conceptual representation should recommend its use to anyone seeking to discover the value of community learning, including that which occurs in online networks. The matrix is suitable for presentation to supervisors and sponsoring organizations in such a way as to make the value created immediately apparent, without having to provide voluminous supporting evidence. This evidence can of course be offered to support the matrix if required. The use of the framework is recommended for promoting and assessing the value created by community and network participation and will soon be offered in an updated and revised format (Trayner, 2014).

8.3 The means and ends of HME—an expanded view

In light of the above sections which answer research questions 1 and 2 on student’s agency and the value created by participation in collaborative learning, the following section reflects on these findings and articulates an expanded view of the means and ends of HME within the USQ context. Rather than simply reflecting on practice and how to improve it, this reflection seeks to ultimately address the very goals and purpose of music practice or performance at USQ. By doing so, I am engaging in paradigm reflection (Sloboda, 2011) and seeking to extend “preexisting realities through reflection” and challenge “established forms of education and expertise [in HME] creatively and constructively” (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b, p. 3). Cochran-Smith & Lytle (2009) position inquiry as stance “as both a counterhegemonic notion that challenges prevailing assumptions about practice and as an affirmative, transformative notion grounded in alternative—and, with regard to the collective capacity of practitioners, radical—viewpoints about teaching, learning, leading, and schooling” (Chapter 5, Critical dimensions of inquiry as stance, para. 1). In this study, adopting an inquiry stance towards practice has provided me as teacher/researcher with an alternative viewpoint on the teaching and learning of music practice or performance within HME. Cochran-Smith and Lytle contend that the results of practitioner inquiry and reflection upon them creates new knowledge—inquiry stance is both a way of knowing and of knowing new things. That these results spring from a local context does not make them any less valid within an inquiry stance framework—in fact, this type of local knowledge generation is precisely how educational

contexts are transformed (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

8.3.1 An expanded view of practice

One of the critical dimensions of the construct of inquiry as stance is developing “an expanded view of practice as the interplay of teaching, learning, and leading, as well as an expanded view of who counts as practitioner” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, Chapter 5, Critical dimensions of inquiry as stance, para. 2). This expanded view of practice⁵¹—or the means within HME—recasts the traditional roles of student as apprentice or novice and teacher as master or expert (Bjontegaard, 2015; Persson, 1994, 1996a, 1996b). Gaunt and Westerlund (2013b) identify collaborative learning’s potential to disrupt the hierarchical relationship between teachers and students within HME. Participants’ experiences in this study conveyed that these disruptions occurred within collaborative learning at USQ—the roles of teacher and student were no longer clearly or traditionally defined. The most valued learning was the result of peer-to-peer interaction. This valuing of peer-to-peer learning and teaching challenged my position as teacher and holder of the authority of knowledge and power (Bruffee, 1999).⁵² My own experiences of collaborative learning corroborate this. Students and the teacher taught, learned and led. These learning transactions

⁵¹ Within the context of the following discussion, *practice* is used to denote learning and teaching practice within a music practice/performance context.

⁵² Interestingly, as I noted in my overall value creation story, some students did not understand that they were being invited, albeit implicitly, to participate in such a way. This was evident during the student/teacher interviews in week 5 of semester one when some students experienced these discussions as adversarial. These students did not complete the year and were therefore not participants in this study.

did not occur on a simple linear trajectory whereby knowledge or information was transmitted from teacher to student, or students learned by imitating the teacher, as is often the case with one-to-one tuition (Bjøntegaard, 2015). Rather, these transactions involved complex social relationships in which both students and the teacher viewed student peers as legitimate teachers and the teacher was also a learner.

Learning and teaching practice was thus a collaborative effort, shared amongst participants. Regelski (2008) writes of

the need for music pedagogy and curriculum to move from the autocratic models typical of the conservatory training of music professionals to one that more directly involves students in choices about their own music education, their own musical futures; one that fosters, in other words, democratic sensibilities that can carry over to life—musical and otherwise—outside of school. (p. 7)

The findings in this study demonstrate that collaborative learning afforded students choices in their own education and fostered a democratic atmosphere within the courses where the authority of knowledge and power were shared. Thus, collaborative learning promotes the unveiling and making explicit, of specialised artistic expertise which generally informs the practice of music (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b). It also promotes the democratisation of this expertise. From participants' experiences, such expertise was not perceived as only residing in the teacher—it was seen as being shared equally amongst students and teacher and respected, regardless of skill level or experience. These findings reflect the characteristics of

participatory culture and challenge prevailing assumptions within HME regarding the roles and expertise—both musical and pedagogical—of teacher/student.

Students valued both the process and the products of participating in learning and teaching, rather than simply leaving the teaching domain to the teacher. This finding confirms both Westerlund (2008) and Wenger's (1998) contentions that the educational value for students lies in social phenomena and through playing a role in shaping the learning environment. As Westerlund (2008) notes

When music education is viewed from the perspective of internally related chains of learners' experiences, the learners will also condition the choice of means and teaching methods. The learners are not accommodating themselves to the pedagogical methods but, rather, the teacher's pedagogical decisions and actions ought to be *valuable in and for* the processes in which learners grow. (p. 88)

In this study, primarily during rehearsal times, the students themselves largely conditioned the ways in which they learned and taught others. This is not to say that the teacher was entirely absent from this process. Through regular check-ins with rehearsing groups during class time, I was able to help direct the implicit learning and teaching that was already occurring in the rehearsal rooms, without dictating pedagogical methods.

This collaborative view of learning and teaching practice should go some way towards addressing concerns that in informal learning environments the teacher is largely absent from shaping the learning

environment (e.g. Allsup, 2008, Allsup & Westerlund, 2012). In describing this type of pedagogy, Allsup (2008) writes of the possibility of bringing together students and teachers within “[p]urposeful, democratic spaces...where plausible human interests intersect with shared desires” (p. 7). In such an environment the focus is not exclusively on either the teacher or the students. Rather, value is determined collaboratively and growth is the result of interaction, instead of isolation (Allsup, 2008). This study has demonstrated that, within the 2014 learning community, a democratic approach towards learning and teaching practice evolved quite naturally as a result of the social interactions between participants. Participants’ experiences would suggest that, rather than *collaborative learning*, *collaborative learning and teaching* more accurately describes the pedagogical model used by the 2014 learning community.⁵³

As noted earlier, students experienced the heterogeneity of the student cohort as a valuable learning resource. Westerlund’s (2008) pluralist, holistic vision of music education embraces difference as a valuable source of learning. Whilst culturally quite homogenous, the 2014 learning community had members from different walks and stages of life, with widely varied tastes, interests, motivations and levels of commitment. These differences were a source of frustration for students at times, but most students used difference as a way to constructively engage with learning.

⁵³ Westerlund (2008) discusses a number of other empirical studies which demonstrate that “the most important factor in how positively or negatively the students experienced their studies was the possibility of having an influence on the teaching and learning situations” (p. 88). The findings in this study further support this notion, due to students’ positive experiences of participating in and heavily influencing learning and teaching practice.

Rather than working towards some aesthetic ideal, students were free to explore their own sense of individuality because difference was seen as valuable, rather than deviant. In this sense, collaborative learning expanded practice within HME as it was the students' choice to decide what was important to learn for themselves, rather than having this imposed upon them. This finding will be discussed further in relation to the ends of HME, below.

Rather than interpreting these findings as a poor reflection on the quality of teaching—in fact, student feedback for MUI1001 was very good (see Appendix D)—they can be viewed as a positive expansion of the learning environment and the means through which students learn. Seen through Karlsen's (2011) musical agency lens, students' learning from each other built agency because it *increased their access to learning experiences*. In short, collaborative learning environments offer a more broad and diverse range of learning experiences than transmission pedagogical models. As was discussed in the Introduction, the learning and teaching of music practice or performance in HME is usually based on the one-to-one model. This model traditionally delimits the learning environment to a master teacher and a student apprentice. Recent research has shown that there are efforts in some institutions to expand one-to-one to a blended model to include group and master classes (e.g. Bjøntegaard, 2015; Luff & Lebler, 2013). Research by Virkkula (2015) suggests that communal learning practices have much to recommend themselves in HME contexts. Nonetheless, one-to-one remains the dominant pedagogical means for music practice in HME. The findings in this study support Lebler's (2007)

argument that student-led pedagogy should be more prominent in HME. Collaborative learning is one way to introduce student-led pedagogy into a learning context previously and traditionally characterised by master-apprentice style pedagogy. At the risk of stating the obvious, restricting the learning environment to teacher and individual student negates the opportunity for peer-to-peer learning. Teaching within master classes and workshops is often mediated by the teacher (Bjøntegaard, 2015). By restricting membership and institutionally regulating (Bjøntegaard, 2015) the roles of teacher and student, learning environments based on transmission do not recognise the value students gain from learning and teaching each other.

The numerous relationships formed within the 2014 learning community are likely to continue to impact upon participants beyond the immediate context. Whilst this is not something necessarily unique to relationships formed within collaborative learning—indeed, the master-apprentice relationship can become one of mentor-mentee (Bjøntegaard, 2015; Collens & Creech, 2013; Creech et al., 2008)—one must consider the sheer number of important relationships formed within a collaborative learning environment as being advantageous in itself. Moreover, the potential value of these relationships accords with the broader sense of agency in sociology as a “temporally embedded process of social engagement” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 963). Viewed temporally, agency—or the capacity for social engagement—extends from being informed by the past, to include an orientation to the future, in so much as individuals have the capacity to imagine possibilities and “to contextualize

past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 962). Both the findings on agency and value creation accord with agency as a temporally embedded social process and demonstrate at the very least the potential value created by collaborative learning. The point to be made here, however, is that the potential value of inter-peer relationships to student learning is not traditionally recognised. The findings in relation to peer-to-peer learning at USQ indicate that this potential is worth exploring.

Rather than viewing teaching within collaborative learning as a diminution of teacher authority or a devaluing of teacher knowledge and expertise, my experience has been that teaching and learning collaboratively with students built my agency as a teacher. Allsup and Westerlund (2012) state that “[t]eacher agency—the moral consequence of situational deliberation— is the capacity to reconstruct the means and ends of teaching into a constant *re*-organization of values for the good or the growth of oneself and others” (p. 126). Returning to the metaphor of playing the changes, the constant re-organization of values described by Allsup and Westerlund is precisely the way in which I experienced teaching the 2014 cohort. My role was to facilitate the optimal learning experience for each student, regardless of their learning style, personality, skill level or experience. This style of teaching is described by Jorgensen (2003a) as dialogical or conversational teaching in which “the teacher is reflecting in the midst of action, devising strategies on the spot, and attempting to take advantage of the present moment, no matter how unexpected the particular circumstances” (p. 130). Having the opportunity to teach in this way, as

described in my overall value creation story, has built my agency as teacher in that my capacity to act in any given situation has increased, as has my confidence in my own abilities to respond appropriately.

For other practitioners, it must be noted that teaching dialogically or conversationally is not without its challenges. As Allsup and Westerlund (2012) note, the cultural trope of portraying oneself as the expert or master teacher who possesses all the answers is still very much alive and well in music education.⁵⁴ Such a mindset is inculcated during teacher training, they argue and leads to teachers disguising uncertainty, fostering the erroneous notion that teachers are no longer learning. For many students, I believe this was their first experience with being involved in learning and teaching practice and their first meeting of a teacher who did not present as the holder of the authority of knowledge and power. This can be confronting for students as they are expected to take, perhaps for the first time, much greater responsibility for their own learning. This should certainly not discourage teachers from adopting this approach, but I believe an awareness of students' potential reactions and perhaps even explicit discussions about the collaborative approach to teaching and learning can assist students to understand the role they are being asked to play, thereby giving questions of

⁵⁴ It is for this reason that introducing collaborative learning practices into music practice and performance courses can be challenging. Christophersen (2013) argues that music educators are experts in their field and that keeping this expertise hidden for the sake of creating a democratic learning environment may be unhelpful. She further contends that teachers' expertise, which brings with it a position of authority and power, should not be denied and that the distribution of power particularly in relation to formal evaluation processes should be given careful consideration. These arguments are addressed further below.

power and authority careful consideration (Christophersen, 2013). Due to its improvisatory, dialogical nature, there are no readily available guidelines for such a learning and teaching model. Unlike the one-to-one model, there is no long tradition of pedagogy to draw from. However, rather than viewing this as a deterrent, practitioners should view this lack of guidance as an opportunity to increase their own agency as teachers, by trusting intuition and working alongside students to create a democratic learning atmosphere.

Finally, in relation to my own teaching practice, I noted in my overall value creation story that I gained insight into my lack of ability to directly control the actions of individuals and the interactions within the ensembles. Westerlund (2008) writes that “[i]n music education, social events—that are often called the context or function of music—are thus experienced, not taught as such” (Westerlund, 2008, p. 84). Whilst it is possible to shape others’ experiences to a certain extent, it is not possible to dictate them, just as it is not possible to dictate others’ responses to these experiences. Ultimately, the way in which students respond to these experiences is their decision and many of the participants did so in ways which exhibited maturity and personal insight. However, for students who are unable to respond constructively to learning experiences, I have realised that my ability to change these responses is limited. This is not intended as a revocation of my responsibility as teacher, but is articulated so that I will set more realistic expectations of students in future.

Thus far, this reflection has cast practice within collaborative learning in a mostly positive light. Christophersen (2013) cautions against the idealisation of collaborative learning. Whilst acknowledging that

collaborative music learning can be open, inclusive and democratic, she argues that “if one’s perception of collaborative music learning implies some notion of democratic principles, one should clearly identify what concept of democracy one’s arguments are based upon” (Christophersen, 2013, p. 79). In this study, the concept of democracy relied upon is participatory democracy “characterized by an emphasis on common good, consensus and dialogue” (pp. 79–81) which, Christophersen argues, can result in a portrayal of collaborative learning as

a rather glossy picture of motivated, happy students, freeing their human potential through music, and actively seeking consensus by participating in open social and musical dialogue within an inclusive and accepting community of equals. (p. 80)

Whilst I have sought to depict collaborative learning in a balanced way, I do accept that ultimately this study portrays participants’ experiences of collaborative learning positively. However, as indicated in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, collaborative learning was not without its challenges. The source of many of these challenges for the students and me as teacher was students who did not complete the courses and have therefore not participated in this study.

Whilst participating students and I experienced collaborative learning as open, inclusive and democratic, it is possible to speculate that non-completing students did not. Perhaps these students were the victims of being cast by the learning community as bad collaborators, something Christophersen (2013) argues is “the result of the execution of power and social control” (p. 78)? To develop a nuanced concept of collaborative

learning, Christophersen argues that the presence of power and conflict within collaborative learning must be acknowledged. Left unacknowledged, the implicit expectations upon students to take responsibility, commit and act interdependently form the hidden curriculum of collaborative learning (Christophersen, 2013).

Christophersen (2013) argues that, whether done implicitly or explicitly, the imposition of a collaborative attitude is linked to power, in the sense of a “subtle regulation of individual behaviour in accordance with social conventions or expectations” (p. 82). She concludes that the use of power within collaborative learning raises ethical questions about the nature, suitability and fairness of collaborative learning in HME and that these questions must be discussed before, during and after the institutionalization of collaborative learning practices. At USQ, the use of collaborative learning practices is discussed at the audition and interview stage for prospective students. Students exhibiting a desire for a more individualized approach are counselled against enrolling in the program and advised to seek more appropriate degree pathways. As previously mentioned, the course “Preparing for success” which runs parallel to MUI1001 canvasses the ethical issues raised by Christophersen (2013). In short, whilst acknowledging the points raised by Christophersen, collaborative learning practices are openly discussed at USQ with a view to making explicit the role power plays within regulating the learning environment.

In summary, participants’ experiences of collaborative learning created an expanded view of teaching and learning practice. Learning and

teaching became a collaborative, social endeavour which promoted the unveiling of explicit musical and pedagogical expertise. Students valued both the process and products of this expanded practice and as a result, I suggest that collaborative learning is more accurately described in this context as collaborative learning and teaching. This expansion of learning and teaching practice and the learning environment itself, with its numerous heterogeneous members, created an inclusive, rather than exclusive learning community providing students with access to many and varied learning experiences. The prevailing cultural trope of the master teacher, does, however, mean it may take time and explicit discussion of the pedagogical approach for students to understand their role within collaborative learning and teaching. My own experience was that collaborative learning and teaching expanded my agency as teacher. Due to the creative and improvisatory nature of the teaching, I was able to increase my capacity to reconstruct the means and ends of teaching, which is the very definition of teacher agency proposed by Allsup and Westerlund (2012). This reconstruction with its attendant re-organization of values in the best interests of myself and the students was, as outlined in the Prologue, “the moral consequence of situational deliberation” (Allsup & Westerlund, 2012), driven primarily by the demands of context.

Teachers who adopt collaborative learning and teaching must be constantly vigilant that the learning community does not become as oppressive as the models it is trying to replace (Wenger, 1998). This requires members to sustain identification of and engagement with the processes, resources and fundamental purpose of the learning community

(Wenger, 1998). Wenger (1998) acknowledges that such a process is demanding and time-consuming, but is nonetheless necessary to ensure that communities do not become hostages to their own success. For the successful sustenance of a learning community, Wenger requires participants, not just teachers, to engage in a high level of reflexivity around learning and teaching practice and the ethics informing this practice. In a similar vein, Christophersen (2013) argues that the uncritical exercise of power and social control within collaborative learning can result in students unwittingly learning to behave appropriately within collaborative learning. To mitigate against the oppressive use of collaborative learning, ethical questions relating to its use must be constantly addressed amongst the learning community and in the case of USQ, with prospective students. The findings in this study support the argument that, when its use is pre-empted and then reflexively and critically monitored, collaborative learning can be an expansive musical and pedagogical practice for teachers and students alike. What this study cannot demonstrate is the converse proposition, namely that students who did not continue with collaborative learning did so because they experienced it as oppressive and unsuitable to their needs. An exploration of this issue could possibly yield an alternative viewpoint on collaborative learning and is worth pursuing in future research.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Directions for future research are discussed further in Chapter 9.

8.3.2 (Re)valuing non-musical outcomes

Participants' experiences of collaborative learning at USQ provide a source for critical reflection on the ways in which collaborative learning influenced learning outcomes, or the ends of HME in this context. The Prologue explained that the conservatoire model, with an emphasis on one-to-one teaching, was used at USQ prior to collaborative learning. The primary goal of conservatoire training is to produce performers with strong technique and a sense of artistry and these ends are fixed by the longstanding tradition of the conservatoire (Väkevä & Westerlund, 2007). This is also the main concern of most higher music education performance programs (Carruthers, 2008). As has been noted previously, one of the central concerns of practitioner inquiry is to problematize the ends question of education and discover what non-traditional outcomes educational contexts might facilitate (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Extending this line of inquiry, this study addresses these questions—Who should HME at USQ serve and for what purpose? Should the purpose of all HME be fixed by tradition, or should the purpose of HME change according to context?

Placing social participation at the centre of a learning environment carries with it implications for learning outcomes. As Westerlund (2008) notes

[i]f the social aspects of learning experiences have traditionally been treated as extra-musical consequences of musical experience, in a holistic approach they form the bedrock of any experience. The teacher's concern should therefore be transferred from good public

performances to the learners' experiences. (p. 88).

From previous discussion, it was demonstrated that the social aspects of participants' experiences in this study *did* in fact, form the bedrock of their experience. As teacher, my ultimate concern was learners' experiences. This involved managing the social welfare of students, optimizing the benefits and negotiating the challenges of collaborative learning for students. Facilitating musical outcomes such as improved performance or artistry were subordinate to these concerns.

Returning to the Introduction, context was stressed at the outset as being of primary importance within this study and context is particularly germane when discussing the findings in relation to learning outcomes. To re-iterate, this study was conducted within a small, regional Australian University. The music student cohort is small but diverse in terms of prior music learning and experience and USQ has many students who are the first in their family to study at tertiary level. Many, but not all, music students at USQ would fail to gain entry into conservatoria due to their lack of formal theoretical knowledge and practical skills. This study argues that, beyond securing a place within a conservatorium, these students have a right to study music at university and many go on to make a meaningful contribution through music to their communities. Given the context, this study argues the case for permitting such students to study music practice and performance, particularly in light of the very meaningful, non-musical outcomes students achieved through learning music practice collaboratively.

Taking into consideration students' backgrounds, prior experience and the regional context, it is not surprising that around half the students in this study felt that non-musical outcomes were significant and meaningful learning outcomes. These ends may be entirely divorced from musical artistry and do not accord with the traditional ends of HME based on conservatoire training. Such an expanded view of the ends or purposes of HME takes Elliott and Silverman's (2014) praxial philosophy of music education one step further—rather than existing to facilitate artistry and *eudaimonia*,⁵⁶ in certain contexts, HME might *only* facilitate the personal flourishing which is central to *eudaimonia*. This is not a failing of HME within this context, but rather an example of an educational context directly serving the individual and their needs. Collaborative learning, with its capacity to create many and varied learning experiences, is nimble enough to encompass such an important but highly individualised educational purpose. This study advocates for the value of a higher musical education experience, which, when viewed in context, for some students may be of personal, rather than musical or artistic value.

This is not to say that musical outcomes do not play a role within music practice at USQ—in the case of Jack, for example, they were of great significance. However, this study advocates that non-musical outcomes should be re-valued within certain HME contexts and that in some cases if a

⁵⁶ Discussed in Chapter 3, *eudaimonia* is a multidimensional Aristotelian term meaning “full human flourishing: a ‘good life’ of significant, enjoyable, and meaningful work and leisure; personal and community health and well-being; virtue; and fellowship, self-worth, and happiness for the benefit of oneself and others” (Elliott & Silverman, 2014, p. 59)

student only achieves a non-musical outcome, such a learning outcome is valuable. Regional universities such as USQ should value, in addition to musical outcomes, the personal transformation that music education experiences can potentially facilitate, rather than adhering, regardless of context, to the conservatoire model with its markedly different educational ends. This study demonstrates that learning music practice collaboratively “engenders purpose in the product itself” (Carruthers, 2008, p. 132). In other words, music and students’ experiences of learning it with each other were of central importance in creating a range of valuable, non-musical learning outcomes.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s (2009) view of inquiry as stance as a theory of transformative action is an expanded view of educational practice which incorporates not only what the teacher does, but also, amongst other things, students’ learning. This expanded view requires asking “questions about what counts as learning, what learning counts, and to whom” (Chapter 5, Practice as the interplay of teaching, learning, and leading, para. 1). Experiences within this study show that many students were able to answer these questions for themselves, rather than relying on the teacher to either provide answers or impose the teacher’s views upon them. What counted as learning for Shane was a burgeoning awareness of his personal struggles to find his way to music education and the difficulties he was now facing in pursuing this education. For Maddie, learning was about regaining a sense of self-confidence. Cate’s learning focused on her own inability to personally commit to practice. For Hope, it was about the sheer joy of making music and friends with her peers. Gemma gained an awareness of

her tendency to compare herself with others and formulated constructive strategies to combat this. Jack realised his shortcomings as a musician through playing with others and the creative goldmine that lies within collaboration. Mark was acutely aware that the journey he had embarked on was one of both musical and personal transformation. It was our experience that collaborative learning allowed these students to play the changes—to improvise their own learning according to their own needs, responding to context. Such non-musical, transformative outcomes, which are clearly important to these students, should have a valued place in HME contexts like USQ. Westerlund (2008) writes that

Ultimately, the learner will evaluate the value of his or her learning experiences in relation to his or her personal life which includes past and future events, whether educational or not. In this process, every good and meaningful experience is *suggesting some consequences* on the life goals of the individual. Valuation is born in processes where the reached end is a means for future ends-in-view as well as a test of valuations previously made. (p. 87)

Westerlund explains that valuation is created through processes which, in facilitating the achievement of present goals, in turn feed the pursuit of future ends and can also be used to reflect on past achievements. Through understanding the temporal nature of the valuation of meaningful educational experiences, it becomes clearer how such experiences might potentially motivate life-long learning in music.

These findings accord with Westerlund's (2008) view that the actions

and interactions involved in learning music are not simply ways to become a better musician, or to gain access to the world of music—they can “themselves be sources of valuation which also reconstruct the learner’s view of him or herself” (p. 83). The findings of this study strengthen those of Virkkula (2015) who reported that students’ participation in group workshops with professional musicians “supported a growth in [student] identity” (p. 8). Furthermore, these findings respond to numerous challenges in Dewey’s work: to evolve beyond a model of transmission education to experiential education; to accept the futility of reliance upon fixed means and methods to secure all involved against uncertainty (Allsup & Westerlund, 2012); and to re-align the core purpose of learning towards the negotiation of meaning and identity rather than the transmission of skills (see also Wenger, 1998). Skills still occupy an important position within the learning environment and indeed are central to the practice of the learning community, however, they are no longer an end in themselves. Skills are acquired in the service of an identity:

Because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming—to become a certain person or, conversely, to avoid becoming a certain person. Even the learning that we do entirely by ourselves eventually contributes to making us into a specific kind of person. (Wenger, 1998, p. 215)

Indeed, for students who do not continue beyond the first year or first semester of music practice, the experience may be an important one in

clarifying that they wish to avoid becoming a certain person. This study's exploration of the complexities of collaborative learning demonstrates that collaborative learning facilitates the type of learning described by Wenger—learning which is identity-shaping, individually-focused and for some students, transformative.

Westerlund (2008) contends that Dewey's theory of valuation "...encourages a revolutionary reconstruction of practices when the previous ones have not been working to involve every learner equally, on their own terms, in activities that support their interest in music learning" (p. 92). Whilst, as Westerlund notes, Dewey offers no definitive answers on how to improve education, in my experience collaborative learning provides practitioners with an opportunity to *do* and *view* music education differently. As outlined in the Prologue, previous practices at USQ were not working well enough to support learners on their own terms. Discovering aspects of Dewey's philosophy through the writings of Westerlund has encouraged me during the sometimes difficult process of reconstructing these practices. In being encouraged to reconstruct practice and to study the processes and outcomes of the learning environment and I do feel that at USQ we are "a little better off here and there" (Lach, quoted in Westerlund, 2008, p. 92). Participants' experiences in this study demonstrate that a collaborative learning model is contextually appropriate and has gone some way to addressing the challenges faced at USQ.

Finally, if non-musical outcomes are to be re-valued within certain HME contexts, how should these outcomes be assessed? As was discussed in Chapter 2, the use of collaborative learning with its theoretical basis in a

social theory of learning ideally requires that students be assessed in terms of trajectories of meaningful participation and learning identity (Wenger, 2004). Also discussed in Chapter 2 was the requirement in the Australian Qualifications Framework that graduates of Bachelor programs apply skills and knowledge “with initiative and judgement in planning, problem solving and decision making in professional practice . . . to adapt knowledge and skills in diverse contexts with responsibility and accountability for own learning and professional practice and in collaboration with others . . .” (Australian Qualifications Framework Council, 2013, p. 48). Assessment of collaborative learning can provide the opportunity for students to reflect upon personal learning trajectories and also demonstrate the learning outcomes relating to the application of skills and knowledge required by the AQF. At USQ, meaningful participation was assessed for the 2014 cohort through peer and self-assessments (see Appendix A). Students who address the criteria in these rubrics are certainly applying knowledge and skills with initiative and judgement in planning, problem solving and decision-making in professional practice. Learning identity was also assessed to a certain extent for the 2014 cohort through reflective essays and journals. However, a suggestion to inspire more reflexive and insightful reflection is to ask students to write their own value creation stories for assessment. The framework is not intended to be purely evaluative, but a source for learning for community participants (Wenger & Trayner, 2014). Students could be provided with the template from Wenger et al.’s (2011) framework to guide this process. To a certain extent, this study has conducted this assessment for the 2014 cohort, however, future iterations of the courses could involve

the students more directly in this process, thus enabling students to directly engage in addressing the issue of non-musical learning outcomes for themselves.⁵⁷ Such a task would add a level of reflexivity about the process and products of collaborative learning to assessment practices whilst speaking directly to AQF requirements.

⁵⁷ It is acknowledged that because these are university courses, the ultimate mark awarded is the teacher's domain (Christophersen, 2013).

Chapter 9. Conclusion

The findings in this study reveal issues of educational significance. Our experiences reflect the essential characteristics of collaborative learning as described in the literature and in terms of learning outcomes, students' experiences demonstrate a social theory of learning in action. Viewed in isolation, these findings appear to merely confirm existing knowledge concerning collaborative learning. However, as has been emphasized throughout this study, context is of critical importance. These findings are significant because collaborative learning practices have not been prominent in HME and this is particularly so for music practice or performance. Reflection upon the experiences of collaborative learning in this study expanded notions of learning and teaching practice for music practice or performance. In addition to expanding practice, participants' experiences established the case for re-valuing the non-musical outcomes of HME at USQ. It is for these reasons that the findings in this study constitute an original contribution to the body of knowledge on collaborative learning within HME.

9.1 Implications for practice

It is not the intention of this study to propose collaborative learning as a replacement for current pedagogical models for the teaching and learning of music practice or performance in HME. Rather, this study is intended to demonstrate that certain contexts may lend themselves to a collaborative approach. Collaborative learning may or may not be appropriate where a high level of specialisation on an instrument or voice is desired—this is yet

to be researched.⁵⁸ However, where students' likely careers require musical versatility and strong interpersonal skills, collaborative learning for music practice, due to its holistic rather than specialised nature, provides students with the space to not only develop musical skills, but to explore their musical and personal identities. Furthermore, the development of generic skills such as interpersonal communication and problem solving will benefit students regardless of whether their future careers involve music or some other domain. This study is designed to prompt practitioners within HME to consider whether some degree of collaborative learning might be appropriate for their own educational contexts.

Whilst wishing to encourage practitioners to consider collaborative learning, this study cannot suggest a collaborative learning “method” for use in HME. This is because pedagogical improvisation was at the heart of our experiences of collaborative learning. Both the students and I became improvising teaching and learning practitioners—students improvised learning and teaching and improvised their own learning outcomes, based on the lessons being provided by context; I improvised learning and teaching, again responding to the ever-evolving learning environment on an as needed basis. As a model rooted in pedagogical improvisation, the specific nature of collaborative learning will always depend on variable

⁵⁸ Collaborative learning for music practice or performance has been researched as part of a blend of approaches in HME (e.g. Bjøntegaard, 2015; Luff & Lebler, 2013) but not yet as a stand-alone model. It is understood that Virkkula's (2015) study took place within Finnish conservatories which are more akin to vocational rather than higher education. Latukeyu's (2010) study on the use of socio-cultural approaches to teaching and learning singing practice took place in a context similar to this study, rather than a large, metropolitan conservatorium. Daniel's (2005) study also took place in a regional context.

factors such as time, place, culture and the individuals involved. Whilst there are guidelines in the literature on how to put collaborative learning into practice, it is my experience that these guidelines cannot completely prepare teachers for the vagaries and variables of learning through social participation. Teachers using collaborative learning need to be open to experiencing pedagogical uncertainty and unpredictability.

Collaborative learning can pose a significant challenge to teachers' expertise as musicians and pedagogues. This study demonstrated that through primarily valuing peer-to-peer learning, students to a certain extent denied teachers' expertise, or at the very least, failed to recognise it. Whilst these findings could arguably be attributed to my own identity as teacher and reluctance to portray myself as master, the democratic distribution of power and authority is nonetheless collaborative learning's essential characteristic. Teachers who identify as musical or pedagogical experts may not welcome the challenges to power, expertise and authority posed by collaborative learning and teaching. Furthermore, music educators with a philosophical predisposition towards the aesthetic or inherent musical value of music education may not be inclined to value the non-musical outcomes of collaborative learning.

The 2014 cohort learned to play popular music repertoire collaboratively. As noted previously, students' interest in popular music was amenable to a less formal approach to learning and teaching. This should not, however, discourage teachers wishing to teach classical repertoire collaboratively. Given the centuries-old tradition of chamber music in Western art music, collaborative learning in heterogeneous small groups in

classical music programs could provide a unique peer-based learning experience. As previously noted, the common practice of student-led, non-conducted ensembles and chamber music groups in conservatoires is one practice which already displays at least some characteristics of collaborative learning. The nature of the repertoire being studied should not preclude the use of collaborative learning for music practice or performance.

9.2 Directions for further research

I agree with Virkkula (2015) that further research in the area of communities of practice or collaborative learning might focus on the influence of tradition on pedagogical practices within formal music education. Whilst this study has examined this issue in one regional context, future research might examine the use of collaborative learning for music practice and performance in different contexts such as conservatoria and larger, metropolitan institutions.

It has been noted that many students in this study did not complete the year of music practice courses during 2014. The absence of these students' voices is acknowledged as a limitation of the study. However, this could be the subject of future research to consider the possible links between collaborative learning and students' decisions to discontinue music study. In addition to the challenges experienced by students in this study, such information may uncover other difficulties collaborative learning poses for certain students and may enable collaborative learning practices to evolve to address such issues (see also Christophersen, 2013).

Longitudinal research might examine the role collaborative music

learning plays in fostering a life-long interest in music. Because this study demonstrated that collaborative learning creates value and builds individual and collective agency—temporal processes with the capacity to shape present and future action and provide a point of reflection on past action—research could focus on whether these products of collaborative learning do in fact play a role in shaping an individual’s future music-related conduct. Another focus could be the role non-musical outcomes of collaborative learning might play in shaping future individual conduct within personal and/or other non-musical professional contexts. A longitudinal research project might also focus on the long-term value of the learning community itself. Such research could examine the value created by the community as a corporate repository for knowledge on practice, as distinct from the value participation in communities creates for individuals.

9.3 Concluding remarks

Throughout the course of this study, I have come to realise that collaborative learning is much more than simply a way to address the challenges we faced in delivering the music practice courses at USQ—its use has caused me to ponder at length about “what to get done, why to get it done, who decides, and whose interests are served” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, Chapter 5, Inquiry as stance, para. 6). Collaborative learning has enabled me to reflect on “what kind of human values and ethical stance” (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013b, p. 4) I embrace as a teacher within HME. My experiences have taught me that I embrace democratic, inclusive values and that my ethical stance positions me as a teacher who believes that education should respond to the educational context within which it is being delivered.

My experiences have also taught me that putting these values into practice can at times be quite difficult, given the challenges collaborative learning poses to teachers' authority and expertise and the challenges less than optimal student participation created for both myself and some of the participating students during 2014. It is hoped that this study has presented a balanced rather than an idealized depiction of collaborative learning. Guided by the hidden curriculum of collaborative learning, I will endeavour to maintain reflexivity about the use of collaborative learning in future iterations of the music practice courses. Students will also be encouraged to be reflexive about the processes and products of collaborative learning.

Adopting an inquiry stance towards the complexities of collaborative learning has disrupted expectations regarding learning and teaching practice and learning outcomes within this particular HME context. This study has used narrative inquiry to shift the dominant narrative of teaching and learning music practice or performance from one focused on the one-to-one model towards a different narrative which values learning through social participation. The findings trouble certainty within a broader educational context characterized by the certainty of established traditions.

Whilst this study has provided me with a better understanding of collaborative learning for now, I wish to guard against complacency in both my teaching within and research into, collaborative learning. There is, indeed, nothing certain about playing the changes, be it in the musical or pedagogical sense. Like the jazz improviser seeking meaningful melodic material within the upper extensions of a chord, playing the changes in music education requires music educators to constantly strive for more

elegant, ethical solutions to pedagogical challenges, to remain aware of context and to provide responses which are creative, constructive and innovative. Ultimately, in playing the changes in music education we embrace the uncertainty of process and product inherent in learning music through social participation. Collaborative learning and teaching for music practice or performance in HME is an important yet under-utilised pedagogical model which, when employed in appropriate contexts, has the potential to play a transformative role in the lives of both students and teachers.

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Appendix A: Peer and Self-Assessment Rubrics

A1. Self-Assessment collaboration rubric

Your name					
Mark range	5	4	3	2	1
Participation	I always participated fully and was always on task.	I participated most of the time and was on task most of the time.	I participated most of the time and was on task most of the time but sometimes lost focus.	I participated but wasted time regularly or was rarely on task.	I did not participate, wasted time, or worked on unrelated material.
Leadership	I assumed leadership in an appropriate way when necessary by helping the group stay on track, encouraging group participation, posing solutions to problems, and having a positive attitude.	I sometimes assumed leadership in an appropriate way; attitude was mostly positive.	I sometimes assumed leadership in an appropriate way; attitude sometimes negative.	I usually allowed others to assume leadership or I often dominated the group; frequent negative attitude.	I did not assume leadership or assumed it in a non-productive manner; I adopted negative attitude throughout the collaboration.
Listening	I always listened carefully to others' ideas.	I mostly listened to others' ideas.	I sometimes listened to others' ideas.	I rarely listened others' ideas.	I did not listen to others and often interrupted them.
Feedback	I always offered detailed, constructive feedback when appropriate.	I often offered constructive feedback when appropriate.	I sometimes offered constructive feedback when appropriate.	I occasionally offered constructive feedback, but sometimes the comments were inappropriate or not useful.	I did not offer constructive or useful feedback.
Cooperation	I always treated others respectfully and shared the workload fairly.	I usually treated others respectfully and shared the workload fairly.	I sometimes treated others respectfully and shared the workload fairly.	I sometimes treated others disrespectfully or did not share the workload fairly.	I often treated others disrespectfully or did not share the workload fairly.
Time Management/ reliability	I always completed assigned tasks on time, displayed excellent organisational skills, and was always punctual and reliable.	I usually completed assigned tasks on time and did not hold up progress on the projects because of incomplete work; I was usually well organised, punctual and reliable.	I sometimes completed assigned tasks on time and did not hold up progress on the projects because of incomplete work; I was sometimes disorganised, late or unreliable.	I often did not complete assigned tasks on time, and held up completion of project work, was disorganised, late or unreliable.	I did not complete most of the assigned tasks on time and often forced the group to make last-minute adjustments and changes to accommodate missing work, I was generally disorganised, late and unreliable.

A2. Peer assessment collaboration rubric

Your name	Who are you assessing?				
Mark range	5	4	3	2	1
Participation	Collaborator always participated fully and was always on task.	Collaborator participated most of the time and was on task most of the time.	Collaborator participated most of the time and was on task most of the time but sometimes lost focus.	Collaborator participated but wasted time regularly or was rarely on task.	Collaborator did not participate, wasted time, or worked on unrelated material.
Leadership	Collaborator assumed leadership in an appropriate way when necessary by helping the group stay on track, encouraging group participation, posing solutions to problems, and having a positive attitude.	Collaborator sometimes assumed leadership in an appropriate way; attitude mostly positive.	Collaborator sometimes assumed leadership in an appropriate way; attitude sometimes negative.	Collaborator usually allowed others to assume leadership or often dominated the group; frequent negative attitude.	Collaborator did not assume leadership or assumed it in a non-productive manner; adopted negative attitude throughout the collaboration.
Listening	Collaborator always listened carefully to others' ideas.	Collaborator mostly listened to others' ideas.	Collaborator sometimes listened to others' ideas.	Collaborator rarely listened to others' ideas.	Collaborator did not listen to others and often interrupted them.
Feedback	Collaborator always offered detailed, constructive feedback when appropriate.	Collaborator often offered constructive feedback when appropriate.	Collaborator sometimes offered constructive feedback when appropriate.	Collaborator occasionally offered constructive feedback, but sometimes the comments were inappropriate or not useful.	Collaborator did not offer constructive or useful feedback.
Cooperation	Collaborator always treated others respectfully and shared the workload fairly.	Collaborator usually treated others respectfully and shared the workload fairly.	Collaborator sometimes treated others respectfully and shared the workload fairly.	Collaborator sometimes treated others disrespectfully or did not share the workload fairly.	Collaborator often treated others disrespectfully or did not share the workload fairly.
Time Management/ reliability	Collaborator always completed assigned tasks on time, displayed excellent organisational skills, and was always punctual and reliable.	Collaborator usually completed assigned tasks on time and did not hold up progress on the projects because of incomplete work; usually well organised, punctual and reliable.	Collaborator sometimes completed assigned tasks on time and did not hold up progress on the projects because of incomplete work; sometimes disorganised, late or unreliable.	Collaborator often did not complete assigned tasks on time, and held up completion of project work, was disorganised, late or unreliable.	Collaborator did not complete most of the assigned tasks on time and often forced the group to make last-minute adjustments and changes to accommodate missing work, was generally disorganised, late and unreliable.

Appendix B: Assessing Value Creation

B1. Questionnaires for students based on Wenger et al.'s (2011)

framework

Cycle 1 S1 2014 Questions for Students

Name:

The following questions relate to the group class time of Wednesdays 9-11 and your work within your ensemble group. The experiences you reflect on may be either positive or negative.

1. From your own observations, how would you describe the level of participation in the group workshops and ensemble rehearsals (during the Wed 9 – 11 am time)?
2. Did your group rehearse outside class time? If so, how often, or how many times?
3. With whom did you mainly interact and make connections (could be either staff or students or both)?
4. Which of the connections were most influential on your own development as a musician and why? Remember, you can learn from negative experiences as well as positive ones. Please name individuals
5. Did you find it fun or inspiring to participate in this class? If so, what was fun or inspiring?
6. Did you find it challenging to participate in this class? If so, in what ways?
7. Did you feel that the expectations of your participation in the ensemble work were clearly set out in class? In what ways (if any) were you able to contribute to setting these expectations?
8. Was this class different to your previous learning experiences (eg at school, other university courses)? If so, in what ways was it different?

Cycle 2 S2 2014 Questions for Students

Name:

Please answer the following questions in relation to your participation so far this year in the Wednesday 10-12 classes (ie group classes and ensemble rehearsals). The experiences you reflect on may be either positive or negative.

1. What new knowledge or skills have you acquired?
2. In what ways has your understanding or perspective been challenged or changed?
3. In what ways has your participation inspired or motivated you?
4. In what ways have you gained confidence as a result of your participation?
5. What access to new people have you gained? Do you trust them enough to turn to them for help?
6. Do you feel less isolated now than you did at the beginning of the year? In what ways?
7. Do you feel you are gaining a reputation as a result of your participation?
8. What was your evaluation of the quality of the end of semester concert?
9. Do you see opportunities for learning that you did not see before you participated in this class? What are they?

Final cycles S2 2014 Questions for Students

Name:

Please answer the following questions in relation to your participation this year in the Wednesday 10-12 classes (ie group classes and ensemble rehearsals). The experiences you reflect on may be either positive or negative.

1. What skills do you feel you have acquired through these classes? These skills might be musical or more general skills.
2. Where have you applied the skills you have acquired from these classes?
3. Have you been able to use a connection you've made in this class to accomplish something outside of class?
4. When and how did you use ePortfolio? Did this help you learn or acquire new skills?
5. Did you feel that you were able to contribute to the shape and direction of the classes in any way?
6. What aspects of your performance has your participation in the classes affected? Have you achieved something new? Are you more successful generally?
7. What has the university been able to achieve because of your participation in this class?
8. Has your participation in this class changed the way in which you view music or your participation in it? Can you see new possibilities as a result of your participation?

All responses are confidential and will be anonymised in reporting of results.
Thank you for participating.

B2. Example completed questionnaire and restored version

Cycle 1 S1 2014 Questions for Students

Name: Jack

The following questions relate to the group class time of Wednesdays 9-11 and your work within your ensemble group. The experiences you reflect on may be either positive or negative.

1. From your own observations, how would you describe the level of participation in the group workshops and ensemble rehearsals (during the Wed 9 – 11 am time)?

The participation went well. I would say everyone participated in a level fitting to the group.

2. Did your group rehearse outside class time? If so, how often, or how many times?

The group gathered to rehearse on Mondays 12-1:30 and we stayed for an extra hour after our Wednesday class.

3. With whom did you mainly interact and make connections (could be either staff or students or both)?

“Non-participating student”, due to our work with our instrumental pieces, it required a lot of communication and team work.

4. Which of the connections were most influential on your own development as a musician and why? Remember, you can learn from negative experiences as well as positive ones. Please name individuals

My piano tutor would have been most influential on my development. Because she solidified my knowledge on rudiments very quickly and was very supportive in my learning and the pace and style in which I learned.

5. Did you find it fun or inspiring to participate in this class? If so, what was fun or inspiring?

I found it really fun, it was just genuinely enjoyable to play and develop with everyone. It was also kind of inspiring to see the skills of other people.

6. Did you find it challenging to participate in this class? If so, in what ways?

There were a few aspects of it that were challenging. We were all at different stages in our learning and so it was sometimes a challenge to communicate our messages to each other and use the same material someone else wanted to use.

7. Did you feel that the expectations of your participation in the ensemble work were clearly set out in class? In what ways (if any) were you able to contribute to

setting these expectations?

I felt that the expectations were clearly set out and manageable. I don't think I had many opportunities to contribute to these expectations.

8. Was this class different to your previous learning experiences (eg at school, other university courses)? If so, in what ways was it different?

Yes, there was a lot more practical work (which is a good thing) and the expectations of everyone was much higher, including what I was expected of and what I expected of everyone else. There was also a lot more learning of very relevant skills that coincided with each other.

Cycle 2 S2 2014 Questions for Students

Name: Jack

Please answer the following questions in relation to your participation so far this year in the Wednesday 10-12 classes (ie group classes and ensemble rehearsals). The experiences you reflect on may be either positive or negative.

1. What new knowledge or skills have you acquired?

I have expanded in my area of instrumentation, I have become a lot more versatile with what I can do within the group, changing instruments, singing, harmonising etc.

2. In what ways has your understanding or perspective been challenged or changed?

I came into this course at the start of the year dedicated to being a soloist, but working with groups has made me love working with others and I want to do it more and more. I love music more, desire to create more covers and original music.

3. In what ways has your participation inspired or motivated you?

This group has motivated me in their incredible ideas and skills, they have made me love music even more and through doing these songs I have also become a better composer for it.

4. In what ways have you gained confidence as a result of your participation?

I still suck at communication with other group members. I have gained confidence however in what I can play and how I play it. I am no longer afraid to sing for example in front of the group and I can play a lot more confidently.

5. What access to new people have you gained? Do you trust them enough to turn to them for help?

The extended period of time I have spent in this course has made me trust all of the members and I feel no fear in asking them for help.

6. Do you feel less isolated now than you did at the beginning of the year? In what ways?

Yes, I fell far less isolated. I trust my fellow musicians more and it is good to learn there are other people who love music and making music as much as I do.

7. Do you feel you are gaining a reputation as a result of your participation?

I do often find people commenting on my work, asking for my assistance or skills and telling other people about me and what I can do.

8. What was your evaluation of the quality of the end of semester concert?

Personally I believe the next one will be 350% better than the last one. I did not feel engaged or proud of my group or what we did and I feel we brought the quality down, perhaps the same issues were seen in other groups. The next will be far better as I feel a lot more confident in my group.

9. Do you see opportunities for learning that you did not see before you participated in this class? What are they?

I see the opportunity to work with other members as I have already started to do, outside of this course. It is challenging me, teaching me and expanding my skills and repertoire.

All responses are confidential and will be anonymised in reporting of results.
Thank you for participating.

Final cycles S2 2014 Questions for Students

Name: Jack

Please answer the following questions in relation to your participation this year in the Wednesday 10-12 classes (ie group classes and ensemble rehearsals). The experiences you reflect on may be either positive or negative.

1. What skills do you feel you have acquired through these classes? These skills might be musical or more general skills.

I have learned an abundance of important skills. the first semester very quickly caught be up to the rudimentals of music, such as my scales, chord reading, arpeggios etc. It has also taught me effective learning methods and I have gained an ability to learn and memorise new music at a hyper accelerated rate. Second semester pushed me over my limit into brand new territory of piano skills and group work. I have gained the ability to work effectively within a group, a skill I did not have before and this is highly valued. The new skills I have learned include effective bass lines, jazz, better compositions. I have also gained confidence in my singing ability, as we are free to play what ever instrument we like and can be as innovative as we please. Also, how to read charts, leadsheets and reproduce them.

2. Where have you applied the skills you have acquired from these classes?

In my general repertoire work, I can now learn much faster than ever before and memorise really quickly. My compositional skills have improved greatly and I have obliterated any fear I had of playing to an audience. I have applied these skills in church because I can now read charts to play the music.

3. Have you been able to use a connection you've made in this class to accomplish something outside of class?

I have been working a lot with Shane, who has been giving me tips on my guitar work, he has inspired me to venture out of my comfort zone and go into uncharted territory, which has been great for me. Tamika and Gemma have been helping me with my singing. All of this is working towards my compositional goals.

4. When and how did you use ePortfolio? Did this help you learn or acquire new skills?

ePortfolio did not assist in anyway to my learning. The only time I use it is for doing my assessment.

5. Did you feel that you were able to contribute to the shape and direction of the classes in any way?

I felt liberated and free to do as I liked within the form that was set to work in.

6. What aspects of your performance has your participation in the classes affected? Have you achieved something new? Are you more successful generally?

I have ventured into new instruments, have become far more confident in my performance, I have sung to an audience now, which I have never done to this extent. I am much more inventive with my work and much more versatile. I am open to new things and law breaking, but can also accept the offers of other group members while asserting my own ideas into the think tank. I feel I am definitely more successful.

7. What has the university been able to achieve because of your participation in this class?

The only thin I can think of, is that I have provided positive feedback about the quality of this university and this course and have helped shape peoples decisions about their future with USQ an helped them with their auditions.

8. Has your participation in this class changed the way in which you view music or your participation in it? Can you see new possibilities as a result of your participation?

So much. I used to be a solo thinker, that the music must adhere to my wishes, but now I see it as a group, collaborative synthesis between musicians. I see so many more opportunities and innovations to be made in music and I want to do more work, rather than solo work. I feel I can be relied on as a group member to do what is right by the music.

All responses are confidential and will be anonymised in reporting of results.
Thank you for participating.

Restoried version—Jack

The participation went well. I would say everyone participated in a level fitting to the group. The group gathered to rehearse on Mondays 12-1:30 and we stayed for an extra hour after our Wednesday class.

I mainly interacted with “Non-participating student”, due to our work with our instrumental pieces, it required a lot of communication and team work.

My piano tutor would have been most influential on my development. Because she solidified my knowledge on rudiments very quickly and was very supportive in my learning and the pace and style in which I learned.

I found it really fun, it was just genuinely enjoyable to play and develop with everyone. It was also kind of inspiring to see the skills of other people.

There were a few aspects of it that were challenging. We were all at different stages in our learning and so it was sometimes a challenge to communicate our messages to each other and use the same material someone else wanted to use.

I felt that the expectations were clearly set out and manageable. I don't think I had many opportunities to contribute to these expectations.

Yes, this class was different to my previous learning experiences in that there was a lot more practical work (which is a good thing) and the expectations of everyone was much higher, including what I was expected of and what I expected of everyone else. There was also a lot more learning of very relevant skills that coincided with each other.

It's now semester two and I have expanded in my area of instrumentation, I have become a lot more versatile with what I can do within the group, changing instruments, singing, harmonising etc.

I came into this course at the start of the year dedicated to being a soloist, but working with groups has made me love working with others and I want to do it more and more. I love music more, desire to create more covers and original music.

This group has motivated me in their incredible ideas and skills, they have made me love music even more and through doing these songs I have also become a better composer for it.

I still suck at communication with other group members. I have gained confidence however in what I can play and how I play it. I am no longer afraid to sing for example in front of the group and I can play a lot more confidently.

The extended period of time I have spent in this course has made me trust all of the members and I feel no fear in asking them for help.

Yes, I fell far less isolated. I trust my fellow musicians more and it is good to learn there are other people who love music and making music as much as I do.

I do often find people commenting on my work, asking for my assistance or skills and telling other people about me and what I can do.

Personally I believe the next concert will be 350% better than the last one. I did not feel engaged or proud of my group or what we did and I feel we brought the quality down, perhaps the same issues were seen in other groups. The next will be far better as I feel a lot more confident in my group.

I see the opportunity to work with other members as I have already started to do, outside of this course. It is challenging me, teaching me and expanding my skills and repertoire.

This year, I have learned an abundance of important skills. The first semester very quickly caught up to the rudimentals of music, such as my scales, chord reading, arpeggios etc. It has also taught me effective learning methods and I have gained an ability to learn and memorise new music at a hyper accelerated rate. Second semester pushed me over my limit into brand new territory of piano skills and group work. I have gained the ability to work effectively within a group, a skill I did not have before and this is highly valued. The new skills I have learned include effective bass lines, jazz, better compositions. I have also gained confidence in my singing ability, as we are free to play whatever instrument we like and can be as innovative as we please. Also, how to read charts, leadsheets and reproduce them.

I've applied the skills I've learned in these courses in my general repertoire work. I can now learn much faster than ever before and memorise really quickly. My compositional skills have improved greatly and I have obliterated any fear I had of playing to an audience. I have applied these skills in church because I can now read charts to play the music.

I have been working a lot with Shane, who has been giving me tips on my guitar work, he has inspired me to venture out of my comfort zone and go into uncharted territory, which has been great for me. Tamika and Gemma have been helping me with my singing. All of this is working towards my compositional goals.

ePortfolio did not assist in anyway to my learning. The only time I use it is for doing my assessment.

I felt liberated and free to do as I liked within the form that was set to work in.

Participation has enabled me to venture into new instruments, have become far more confident in my performance, I have sung to an audience now, which I have never done to this extent. I am much more inventive with my work and much more versatile. I am open to new things and law breaking, but can also accept the offers of other group members while asserting my own ideas into the think tank. I feel I am definitely more successful.

In relation to benefit to the university as a result of my participation, the only

thin I can think of, is that I have provided positive feedback about the quality of this university and this course and have helped shape peoples decisions about their future with USQ an helped them with their auditions.

My participation in this class has changed the way I view music and my participation in it so much. I used to be a solo thinker, that the music must adhere to my wishes, but now I see it as a group, collaborative synthesis between musicians. I see so many more opportunities and innovations to be made in music and I want to do more work, rather than solo work. I feel I can be relied on as a group member to do what is right by the music.

Appendix C: Ethics

C1. Initial approach to participate sent by email to all students enrolled in MUI1001 and MUI1002 from Head of School

From: Rhoderick McNeill
Sent: Tuesday, 4 March 2014 12:52 PM
Subject: Participation in PhD research

Dear student

You are receiving this email because you are enrolled in MUI1001 Music Practice 1 (semester one) and will likely continue into MUI1002 Music Practice 2 (semester two).

Melissa Forbes is a PhD student at the Queensland Conservatorium and also one of your lecturers for MUI1001 and MUI1002. Melissa's PhD research is investigating the learning community around MUI1001 and MUI1002 at USQ.

You are invited to participate in this research. The attached documents outline in detail what the research involves and what you would be required to do, should you consent to participate.

Your decision to participate – or not participate – in no way affects your ability to enrol in the courses, participate in the courses, or your assessment for the courses, nor will it affect your relationship with any staff at USQ or services provided by USQ.

At this stage, you do not need to sign the consent form – you will discuss the research and the forms during class early in the semester. You do not need to bring the consent form with you to class – hard copies will be provided on the day. Mark Scholtes (a USQ staff member who is not involved in the research) will discuss the research with you, answer any concerns, and collect the forms from you during class.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Regards

Professor Rhoderick McNeill
Head, School of Arts and Communication
Faculty of Business, Education, Law and Arts
University of Southern Queensland
(07) 4631 1091

C2. Information sheet and consent form



PhD research project: Investigating a learning community for commencing undergraduate music practice students at a regional university

INFORMATION SHEET - STUDENTS

Who is conducting the research?

Senior investigator:
Assoc Prof Don Lebler
Deputy Director (Teaching and Learning), Queensland
Conservatorium Griffith University
3735 6266
d.lebler@griffith.edu.au

Investigator:
Dr Gemma Carey
B Music, M Music, GDip Music, EdD
Conservatorium Griffith University
Senior Lecturer, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith
University
3735 6339
g.carey@griffith.edu.au

Student researcher:
Melissa Forbes
Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University
0414 490 195
melissa.forbes@usq.edu.au

Why is the research being conducted?

This research is being conducted as part of the student researcher's PhD study. The research aims to investigate a learning community amongst commencing first year music practice students at the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) during the academic years 2013 and 2014. The focus of the research is on students and teachers' experiences of the learning environment in MUI1001 and MUI1002. It will involve collecting data from student reflective ePortfolio journals, as well as student questionnaires, and teacher interviews. It is hoped that the research help the researchers understand what works best in a learning community for music students and teachers at USQ.

What you will be asked to do

As this research relates to a course you are already enrolled in, it is important you understand the difference between course-related activities and research-related activities.

The following is a list of course-related activities **which do not directly form part of the research project**:

Course-related activities

- attendance at weekly group classes from 9-11 on Wednesdays
- attendance at weekly classes on performance and preparing for success as musicians (11-12 Wednesdays)
- attendance at weekly instrument-specific classes (day depends on instrument)

- ensemble rehearsal and playing (will mostly be within class time on Wednesdays 9-11 however, you are free to rehearse at any time)
- regular updating of a reflective journal on ePortfolio (in your own time)
- completion of "one-minute papers" (in class time)
- assessment, including submission of ePortfolio, self and peer assessment of ensemble activities, and assessment of technical skill on chosen instrument or voice (scheduled throughout semester)

By signing the consent form, you are consenting to participate in one, some, or all of the research related activities below:

Research activities

- allowing the student researcher (Melissa Forbes) to access your reflective journal on ePortfolio for data collection (no additional time involved for you)
- completion of a short answer questionnaire (in your own time)
- allowing the student researcher to access your answers to "one-minute papers" for data collection (completed in class time - no additional time for you)

Participation is voluntary

Even if you consent to participate in the research, participation in any of the research activities listed above is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time.

Example: You agree to participate in the research. You are later asked if you would like to complete a questionnaire. You are able to decline to complete the questionnaire.

If you do withdraw your consent it will not affect your assessment in MUI1001, MUI1002 or any other course in which you are enrolled. Your decision to participate or not will not have any impact on your relationship with the student researcher, USQ staff and/or its services.

How have participants been selected or screened?

You were identified as a potential participant because you are enrolled in MUI1001 or MUI1002. To protect your privacy, initial contact has been made with you by the Head of the School of Creative Arts at USQ, Assoc Prof Janet McDonald. If you consent to participate in the research there is no further selection or screening process.

Expected benefits of the research

The expected benefits of the research are that it will:

- contribute to the body of knowledge on teaching and learning music practice in higher education
- provide insights and understandings into the nature of student learning within learning communities
- provide insights and understandings into the role teachers play with learning communities
- help teachers gain skills and expertise in teaching music within learning communities

People who are likely to benefit from this research include:

- future music students and staff at USQ
- the student researcher (by gaining a qualification).

If you continue with music practice throughout your degree, you may benefit from this research if the research leads to improved course design.

ePortfolio

If you participate, you are consenting to the student researcher accessing your ePortfolio for research purposes. This may also include entries made prior to the date of the consent form.

If you have any concerns relating to the inclusion of entries on ePortfolio you can contact the student researcher (via email) and ask for the entries to be excluded from the research.

Risks to you

If you participate, the risks to you are minimal and the research is designed to negate these risks wherever possible.

The research team acknowledges the unequal relationship between student participants and the student researcher (who is also a member of the teaching team for MUI1001 and MUI1002) however the research team will work at all times to ensure that respect for dignity and well-being of participants takes precedence over any expected benefits to knowledge which may flow from the research. You will be given time to make a free and informed decision about your participation without pressure from the research team.

There may be certain experiences which you reflect upon in your ePortfolio journal which are of a personal nature. The research team acknowledges the risk inherent in sharing personal stories, and will strive to ensure that such reflections are treated with sensitivity and care.

Your decision to participate or not does not have any impact on your enrolment in or assessment for MUI1001 and MUI1002. Reflective journals will be co-assessed by the teaching team.

The research has been designed so that minimal time additional to course-related activities is required for you to participate.

You may be anonymously quoted in the publication of the results of the research, and there is a risk that when others involved in the research project or the courses read the research, they may be able to identify you by inference. Every effort will be made to anonymize reporting of results.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire will be in the form of short answers to questions such as:

- "How has participation in the courses changed you as a music student?"
- "How has participation in the courses helped your practice as a music student?"
- "How has your participation affected your social connections with other staff and students in the courses?"

Questions can be answered with negative or positive experiences.

The questionnaire may be administered online (on a USQ online interface) or in hard copy. Hard copies will be scanned and the electronic version kept on USQ servers. At the end of the research project, hard copies (if used) will be destroyed. You are able to contact the student researcher at any time after completing the questionnaire to request the exclusion of, or the editing of answers, prior to the publication of results.

One-minute papers

These are like "mini surveys" and consists of two simple questions being asked at the end of each class:

- For you, what was the main point of today's class?
- For you, what is the one issue you'd like to work further on?

You'll be asked to write your answer on the paper, and hand in your paper at the end of class. If you consent to the research, you will not need to include your name on the paper, but you will need to check a box indicating that you are a participant in the research.

Conflict of interest

The student researcher (Melissa Forbes) acknowledges that her position as a member of the teaching team and researcher is a potential conflict of interest. However, the aim of the research is to investigate a learning community which upholds democratic principles and challenges traditional power structures (eg lecturers power over students). Melissa Forbes will at all times endeavour to be transparent in her intentions in this regard and clearly delineate between course and research-related activities.

As your reflective journal on ePortfolio will form part of the data for this research if you consent to participate, your journal will be co-assessed by the teaching team. Melissa Forbes may be one of the assessors, however, your journal will also be assessed by another teacher.

Your confidentiality

Part of the data for the research is your reflective journal in ePortfolios. Your identity will be known to the researcher through your ePortfolio; if you complete a questionnaire, your identity will be known to the researcher.

You will maintain your ePortfolio throughout your degree. This data will therefore itself not be de-identified, however, you will never be identified in the reporting of data from your ePortfolio.

Storage of ePortfolio and questionnaire data will be on USQ's server.
Data will be destroyed within two years of completion of the research project.

Group activity

You can still participate in all course-related activities for MUI1001 and MUI1002 even if you do not participate in the research. The research has been designed so that it is possible to participate in all course-related activities regardless of your participation in the research. Conversely, your participation in the research will not preclude you from participating in any course-related activities.

Questions / further information

If you have any questions or concerns in relation to your participation in the research, please feel free to contact the lead researcher or student researcher listed at the top of this information sheet.

The ethical conduct of this research

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project they should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 3735 4375 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

Feedback to you

It is anticipated that you will receive regular feedback on the research during class and via discussions on ePortfolio. You will be invited to attend a debriefing session after the completion of MUI1001 and MUI1002. You are also invited to read any publications resulting from the research.

Privacy Statement

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and / or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University's Privacy Plan at <http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan> or telephone (07) 3735 5585.



**PhD research project:
Investigating a learning community for commencing undergraduate
music practice students at a regional university**

CONSENT FORM - STUDENTS

Research Team Senior investigator:
Assoc Prof Don Lebler
Deputy Director (Teaching and Learning), Queensland Conservatorium
Griffith University
3735 6266
d.lebler@griffith.edu.au

Investigator:
Dr Gemma Carey
B Music, M Music, GDip Music, EdD
Conservatorium Griffith University
Senior Lecturer, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University
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Student researcher:
Melissa Forbes
Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University
0414 490 195
melissa.forbes@usq.edu.au

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet and in particular have noted that:

- I understand that my involvement in this research will include my participation in one, some or all of the following, depending on my availability at the time:
 - allowing the student/researcher to access my reflective journal on ePortfolio for data collection;
 - completing a short answer questionnaire;
 - allowing the student/researcher to use my answers to the "one-minute papers" for research purposes.
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand my consent covers research activities flowing out of both MUI1001 and MUI1002;
- I understand the risks involved;
- I understand that access to my reflective journal on ePortfolio may potentially include access to entries made prior to the date of this consent form;
- I understand that if I have any concerns relating to the inclusion of entries on ePortfolio or answers to the questionnaire that I can contact the student researcher and ask for the entries to be excluded from the research;
- I understand that there may be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;

- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time;
- I understand that my decision to participate or not will have no impact on my relationship with USQ and/or its staff or services;
- I understand that I am not being assessed as part of MUI1001 and MUI1002 on my participation or not in the research;
- I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty;
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3735 4375 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- I agree to participate in the project.

Name	
Signature	
Date	

C3. Ethics approval

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

01-May-2013

Dear Mrs Forbes

I write further to the additional information provided in relation to the conditional approval granted to your application for ethical clearance for your project "NR: Investigating a learning community for commencing undergraduate music students in a regional university" (GU Ref No: QCM/02/13/HREC).

This is to confirm receipt of the remaining required information, assurances or amendments to this protocol.

All conditions satisfied.

Consequently, I reconfirm my earlier advice that you are authorised to immediately commence this research on this basis.

The standard conditions of approval attached to our previous correspondence about this protocol continue to apply.

Regards

Ms Kristie Westerlaken

Policy Officer

Office for Research

Bray Centre, Nathan Campus

Griffith University

ph: +61 (0)7 373 58043

fax: +61 (07) 373 57994

email: k.westerlaken@griffith.edu.au

web:

Cc:

Researchers are reminded that the Griffith University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research provides guidance to researchers in areas such as conflict of interest, authorship, storage of data, & the training of research students.

You can find further information, resources and a link to the University's Code by visiting <http://policies.griffith.edu.au/pdf/Code%20for%20the%20Responsible%20Conduct%20of%20Research.pdf>

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Appendix D: Student Feedback MUI1001

BdIH:AA15:G

FACULTY OF BUSINESS, EDUCATION, LAW AND ARTS

Professor Barbara de la Harpe
Executive Dean, Faculty of BELA
PHONE +61 7 4631 2317| FAX +61 7 4631 2808
EMAIL Barbara.deLaHarpe@usq.edu.au



12 August 2015

Mrs Melissa Forbes
University of Southern Queensland
West Street, Toowoomba

Dear Mrs Melissa Forbes

Re: Recognition

It is with great pleasure that the Faculty of Business, Education, Laws and Arts acknowledges the very positive rating of your course based on student feedback and other data in MUI001, Music Practice 1 in Semester 1, 2014.

With a significant overall response rate and student enrolment for the course the student's opinions pertaining to overall satisfaction with how the course was taught in the My Opinion survey sees your course as amongst the best of USQ courses.

Congratulations on a job well done. Quality teaching forms the backbone of our institution and your dedication to ensuring quality learning outcomes for our students is much appreciated. We encourage you to continue to excel in your teaching endeavour.

I look forward to seeing your results for the next semester.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barbara de la Harpe'.

Professor Barbara de la Harpe
Executive Dean, Faculty of Business, Education, Law & Arts