Exploring Professional Knowledge in Music Education:
A Narrative Study of Choral Music Educators in St. John’s, NL

by

Nancy Lynn Dawe

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Music Education
Graduate Department of Music
University of Toronto

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Abstract

This thesis explores the professional knowledge of three choral music educators from St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador. My primary research purpose was to explain what constitutes the professional knowledge of each of the research participants as revealed through their life stories; to illustrate how such professional knowledge has been shaped by experiences throughout each of the participants’ lives; and to understand how the participants’ experiences of developing as educators within the specific social, cultural, and political contexts of Newfoundland and Labrador have shaped their professional knowledge.

Through this inquiry, three choral music educators engaged in a process of teacher development, as they discovered for themselves, through a narrative process of self-exploration, the meaning that could be made of the relationships between their life experiences and their knowledge of music teaching and learning.

Data-gathering included a series of four in-depth interviews, which consisted of open-ended questions that engaged the participants in reconstructing their life experiences and articulating their professional knowledge within the context of
developing as choral music educators. Choral rehearsal observations provided another source of data. These observations enhanced my understanding of the participants’ teaching practice, and assisted in my understanding of the relationships between the personal and the professional that they expressed in initial interviews.

Analysis of the data is represented through narratives of the participants’ life stories and a thematic discussion of their professional knowledge as revealed through those stories. Each participant’s narrative and professional knowledge are presented in individual chapters, followed by a chapter that explores the resonances (Conle, 1996) amongst the participants’ narratives and my own personal-professional narrative. I propose that we begin to reconceptualize professional development in order to acknowledge the complexity and personal nature of professional knowledge, and I assert that the exploration of life stories is a meaningful form of professional development for music educators.
Acknowledgements

While the doctoral thesis journey can be a solitary pursuit, my journey to the completion of this thesis was far from an isolated one. I am fortunate to have had an incredible support network that traveled alongside me, especially through the writing process. Sincere thanks to everyone who was part of my team.

My high school yearbook lists my “probable fate” as “a wall full of degrees (and no job).” While I have been building that wall full of degrees, my parents, brother, and sister have provided outstanding emotional and financial support. They have stood behind me during every step of this road less traveled. Thank you, Mom and Dad, Mark, and Angela.

My niece, now eleven, has been one of my biggest cheerleaders. During those times when I would become overwhelmed with the PhD journey, the words of my then three-year old niece would help me push through: “Well, Nancy, if you love yourself and you try your best, then you’ll feel better.” I will treasure those words forever. Thank you, Emily.

To all of my extended family, and especially to my sister in-law Danni, thank you for your words of encouragement and support along the way.

My closest friends live across four provinces and two continents, and they have been there to listen to me, to distract me, to push me, to pick up my spirits, and to celebrate even the smallest achievements with me. Thank you, Krista, Jenn, Michelle R., Kara-Leah, Lynn, Nicole, Michelle P., Rachelle, and Ayanda.

I am very blessed to have had PhD colleagues who have become dear friends. I extend my deepest gratitude to Brigit Ramsingh and Catherine Robbins, for their steadfast friendship and for sharing the wisdom of their PhD experiences with me, and to Deanna Yerichuk, for her collegiality, weekly writing dates, and newfound friendship—I would not have been able to finish without them.

I first encountered my thesis supervisor, Lee Bartel, when I had the honour of having an undergraduate essay published in the Canadian Music Educator journal. At the time, Lee was journal editor, and I never could have imagined how our paths would eventually cross again. Throughout my doctoral program, Lee’s faith in me has been unfailing, and I will be ever grateful for the e-mail messages that simply said, “How are things going?” when he had not received any writing from me in a while. Often, that was the precise nudge I needed to move forward with my work. Lee, thank you for your patience, support, and respect every step of the way.
The other members of my thesis advisory committee also helped guide me from coursework to proposal to thesis to defense. Thank you to Ardra Cole for continually challenging me to bring more clarity and reflexivity to both my ideas and my writing—and for helping me find the beauty and joy in living my research questions. Thank you to Lori Dolloff, who enabled me to gain confidence in my voice as a music educator just when I was considering leaving music to become a social studies teacher, and who was always able to help me make sense of my seemingly incoherent thoughts when I didn’t know what to do next. Ardra and Lori, thank you for seeing me through.

I am fortunate to have had Rodger Beatty and Linda Cameron participate in the final oral examination. Thank you, Rodger, for serving as external examiner, for your encouraging words, and for your close attention to detail. Thank you, Linda, for your thoughtful questions, and most of all, for exemplifying care in the academy.

I extend special gratitude to four other professors who have left lasting impressions with me: Donald Buell, Mary Beattie, Patricia Shand, and Gillian MacKay. Thank you, DB, for your confidence in me, your mentorship, and your friendship. You knew I would pursue a PhD long before I ever did! Thank you, Mary, for introducing me to narrative inquiry and for teaching me the importance of “beginning with myself.” Thank you, Pat and Gill, for always being there to listen and for your practical advice and encouragement from the very beginning.

I am indebted to the three choral music educators who participated in this study. Kate, Katherine, and Callie, thank you for making time for me in your incredibly full schedules, for welcoming me into your rehearsal spaces, and for sharing your personal stories with me. It is a tremendous privilege to be able to share them with others here.

It is said that it takes a village to raise a child—I say it takes a community to write a thesis. For their contributions outside of my academic sphere, I wish to acknowledge Nicole Angelotti (business owner), Dr. Shawna Darou (naturopathic doctor), and Meghan Telpner (holistic nutritionist). I spent countless hours writing my early drafts at Lit Espresso Bar on College Street. Thank you, Nicole, for your exceptional americanos and for cheering me on the whole way. Shawna and Meghan, for giving me the tools to build my health and stay well, I extend my deepest gratitude.

Finally, my most heartfelt appreciation goes to my husband, Phil Yetman, whose routine, “You can do it!” as I walked out the door each day, kept me going more than one could ever know and whose fine editing skills helped me polish this final copy. Phil, thank you for putting aside your own work to be there for me, for calming my fears when my insecurities started to take over, and for simply hanging in there with me. I did it!
Dedication

To the memory of my nan, Frances Sturge,

whose generous and loving spirit continues to sustain me.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... ii

Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................ iv

Dedication ........................................................................................................................................ vi

Chapter One ..................................................................................................................................... 1

   Exploring Professional Knowledge: Beginning with Myself ....................................................... 1

Introducing the Research Context ................................................................................................. 6

   Research Purpose ......................................................................................................................... 6

   Research Questions ...................................................................................................................... 7

Defining Key Constructs .................................................................................................................. 7

   Knowledge, understanding, and belief. ......................................................................................... 7

   Life story. ..................................................................................................................................... 8

   Professional knowledge. .............................................................................................................. 8

   Self-knowledge. ............................................................................................................................. 9

   Teacher development. ................................................................................................................ 9

   Values. ......................................................................................................................................... 10

Significance and Contributions of Study ....................................................................................... 10

Boundaries of the Study ................................................................................................................. 14

Overview of Thesis Structure ...................................................................................................... 16

Chapter Two ................................................................................................................................... 17

Theoretical Underpinnings ............................................................................................................. 17

   Teacher Knowledge ................................................................................................................... 17

   Experience .................................................................................................................................. 19

   Constructivism .......................................................................................................................... 21

Related Studies .............................................................................................................................. 22

   Music Teacher Identity .............................................................................................................. 23

   Music Teacher Knowledge ......................................................................................................... 26

      Information-processing studies. .............................................................................................. 28

      Pedagogical content knowledge. ........................................................................................... 29

      Practical knowledge. ............................................................................................................... 31
Narrative in Music Education ................................................................. 33
  *Experiences of a phenomenon* ......................................................... 34
  *Construction of identity* ................................................................. 36
  *Narrative as a tool for understanding the experiences of teachers* .... 38
  *Narrative as a collaborative research tool* ....................................... 41

Chapter Summary ............................................................................... 43

**Chapter Three** ............................................................................. 44

The Significance of Stories ................................................................. 44

Narrative Inquiry ................................................................................ 48
  *What is narrative inquiry?* ................................................................ 49
  *A subtype of qualitative inquiry?* .................................................... 50
  *A methodology?* .............................................................................. 51
  *A paradigm?* .................................................................................. 53
  *Principles guiding the inquiry* .......................................................... 55

Narrative Inquiry: Summary ................................................................. 56

Research Design .................................................................................. 57
  *Participants* ..................................................................................... 57
  *Interviews* ....................................................................................... 60
  *Observations* .................................................................................. 61
  *Making sense of the data* ................................................................. 62

**Chapter Four** ................................................................................ 67

Prelude .................................................................................................. 67
  *My Relationship to Kate* .................................................................. 67
  *Setting the Research Stage* ............................................................... 69

Part I: Kate’s Story ............................................................................. 70
  *Early Family Life* ............................................................................ 70
  *K-12 Schooling* ............................................................................... 72
  *Undergraduate Education* ............................................................... 74
  *Early Career* .................................................................................... 76
  *Returning to St. John’s* .................................................................... 79

Part II: Kate’s Professional Knowledge ............................................... 81
Setting the Research Stage .................................................................................. 170
Part I: Callie’s Story ............................................................................................ 171
  Early Life ........................................................................................................ 171
Undergraduate Education ................................................................................... 175
  Early Teaching Career .................................................................................... 176
Graduate School ................................................................................................ 179
  Later Career ................................................................................................... 181
Looking Forward ............................................................................................... 182
Part II: Callie’s Professional Knowledge ........................................................... 183
  Knowledge of Self .......................................................................................... 184
    Destiny .......................................................................................................... 184
    Everything comes full circle. ...................................................................... 187
    Lifelong learning ......................................................................................... 189
    Learning from students. ............................................................................. 190
    Cultural identity. ......................................................................................... 193
    Knowledge of self: Summary ..................................................................... 197
  Knowledge of Teaching Role .......................................................................... 198
    Teaching to all. ............................................................................................ 198
    Teaching adolescents. ................................................................................ 200
    Teaching boys. ............................................................................................ 203
    Making a difference. ................................................................................... 205
    Opening doors to a life with music ............................................................. 208
    Knowledge of teaching role: Summary ....................................................... 211
  Knowledge of Teaching Choral Music ............................................................ 212
    Communication of text. .............................................................................. 212
    Teaching through images. ......................................................................... 214
    Knowledge of choral music: Summary ....................................................... 217
  Knowledge of the Choral Milieu .................................................................... 217
    Significance of shared experiences. ............................................................. 217
    Transformation ............................................................................................ 219
    Knowledge of the choral milieu: Summary ................................................. 223
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Values</th>
<th>223</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hard work.</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal best.</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process.</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core values: Summary.</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter Summary ........................................................................................................ 229

Chapter Seven .............................................................................................................. 230

Constructing Knowledge through Resonance ............................................................. 231

Resonances in Professional Knowledge ........................................................................ 231

Knowledge of self. ......................................................................................................... 231

Knowledge of teaching role .......................................................................................... 233

Knowledge of musical experience. ................................................................................ 235

Resonances in Life Experiences .................................................................................... 236

Experiences as students. ............................................................................................... 236

Experiences as teachers. ............................................................................................... 239

Experiences as adult learners. ...................................................................................... 241

Resonances in the Newfoundland Context ................................................................... 243

Lessons learned from the feeling of “less than.” ....................................................... 243

Newfoundland music and identity. ................................................................................ 244

Newfoundland pride. ................................................................................................... 246

Chapter Eight ................................................................................................................ 249

Further Contributions to Knowledge ............................................................................. 250

Professional Knowledge ............................................................................................... 250

Narrative Inquiry .......................................................................................................... 253

Implications ................................................................................................................... 254

Implications for professional development in music education .................................. 255

Implications for music teacher education ...................................................................... 256

Implications for future research .................................................................................... 257

Exploring Professional Knowledge: Ending with Myself ............................................. 259

References ...................................................................................................................... 261
Chapter One

“There should be a sign above every classroom door that reads, ‘All teachers who enter: Be prepared to tell your story.’” (Paley, 1989; p. vii)

Exploring Professional Knowledge: Beginning with Myself

My interest in exploring teacher development, in particular the relationship between the personal and the professional, began even before I stepped into my first classroom as a certified teacher. Shortly after graduating from the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland, I sat in my favourite window seat in the music building and wrote in my journal:

I am very interested in how we come to make decisions about who we will be in our grown-up lives. I am interested in learning about the process we go through to come into our own beings. I made the decision to be a music teacher a long time ago—very early in my life as a musician. At that time, I would have said things like, “I want to be Mrs. Chisholm” [my music teacher at the time]. And as I met more music teachers and had more musical experiences, I would latch onto different people and say, “I want to be Mrs. Etchegary,” or “I want to be Susan Knight.” I just wanted to duplicate exactly what those teachers did. As I got older, my statements modified into, “I want to be like . . .” I started to recognize that I wanted to be able to do what they did while maintaining my own personality. Still, I wasn’t concerned about what it was that I could bring on my own to the field of music education. It was a long time before I figured that out. And maybe that’s why I had to take a break. I needed to figure out what I could bring that would make me a special teacher. (Personal journal; May 3, 2001)

The “break” refers to my decision to withdraw from the Bachelor of Music program halfway through my second year. After only three semesters, I temporarily abandoned my pursuit of a music degree and went on to complete a Bachelor of Arts with
a major in Religious Studies and a minor in Women’s Studies. With that degree in hand, I immediately returned to the Bachelor of Music program and subsequently, the Bachelor of Music Education program. As a music education student, I felt most grounded when I was able to draw upon my background in Religious Studies and Women’s Studies to inform my work. Interestingly, my interest in those fields extends back to my early childhood. I reflected on this connection in a self-study paper during my Master’s programme:

   When I first began playing school, I often taught religion classes. As a child, I was fascinated with the stories of the Bible and the lives of saints, the women saints in particular. I do not come from an overly religious family—we went to church every Sunday, but religion was not really a part of our daily life as a family. It was only recently that I remembered that I had been so taken by teaching religion as a child. In gathering data for this particular project, I found cassette tapes that contained audio recordings of me playing school. I was astounded to hear my voice express such passion for teaching my younger brother and sister about the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River. When my siblings complained of having to spend so much time learning about religion, I appeased them by switching the subject to art. However, there was a catch: I gave them the assignment of drawing a picture of John the Baptist baptizing Jesus in the Jordan!

   Listening to the tapes triggered a flood of memories of reading two of my favorite books: my children’s Bible and my book of the lives of women saints. Interestingly enough, I completed a Bachelor of Arts with a Major in Religious Studies and a Minor in Women’s Studies twenty years after immersing myself in books about religion and women. It is only now I am making that connection. The recordings highlighted for me my early interest in the teaching process—my lessons were logically sequential and thorough. It seems to be apparent that I was modeling my teaching after my own schoolteachers. However, I do not recall my own teachers ever teaching religion with the high-spirited energy I demonstrated.
From an early age, I was putting my own personal stamp on my identity as a teacher. (Dawe, 2004)

The journey to becoming a teacher is a complex one. The journey begins at birth and extends for as long as one embraces the role of teacher. For me, the journey has not only been complex, but seemingly convoluted as well. While I knew from a very young age that I wanted to become a teacher, I did not ultimately accept my fate until after eight years of undergraduate schooling. The following narrative account provides a snapshot of my journey.

I can recall wanting to be a teacher from the time I was about four years old. I equated reading with learning, and once I knew how to read, I wanted to share that with others. Throughout elementary school, my favourite pastime was “playing school,” which I almost always had to do on my own. My friends wouldn’t play with me because I wouldn’t let them have turns being the teacher. I didn’t just teach when I played school either. I wrote lesson plans in my plan book, and I would walk back and forth in the hallway of my house, poking my head in each of the rooms, as I pretended to be on lunch supervision. I taught lessons, I corrected tests, and I even shared stories with the other teachers (all pretend) in the “staff room.” There was no doubt in my mind, right up until grade 12, that I was going to be a teacher.

My final year of high school brought a great deal of frustration to me. While I was excited to be preparing for university, I wasn’t sure what I was going to do when I got there anymore. Until then, everything had seemed so clear. From about grade 7, I had planned to complete the conjoint Bachelor of Music/Bachelor of Music Education program at Memorial University. I would then become a high school band director. That had been my dream—until others started having it for me. When the time came to begin the university application process, I was frustrated by the fact that everyone assumed that I would go directly to Music School and take Music Education. While they were right in assuming that it
would be a logical choice for me, they were not willing to listen when I expressed thoughts that I might want to take time to explore other subjects first.

During my first year of university at Memorial, I took courses in English, History, Political Science, Religious Studies, Classics, and Calculus. It was a typical slate of courses for first-year students who had not yet declared a major. I took trumpet lessons with Memorial’s trumpet professor; I played in the university’s Concert Band; and I was band manager of the local school board’s district band. It seemed that I had the best of both worlds—my liberal arts education and my music life as well. In March, I auditioned for Music School, and I was accepted to the Bachelor of Music program. I began the Bachelor of Music program at Memorial in my second year of university, and I felt good about the decision I had made. I didn’t find my course work to be all that interesting, but I was loving playing the trumpet more than I ever had before.

It wasn’t long into my second year of Music School that I started to get bored. I continued to love playing the trumpet, and my lessons were going well. But I was feeling overwhelmed by having to think and breathe music all day long, every day. The novelty that I experienced the year before was gone. I felt like I was memorizing music all the time—whether it was historical facts, conducting patterns, or rules of harmony. I felt numb. I wanted to think—not memorize!! Near the end of the fall term, I made the decision to switch programs. I did not return to Music School in January. Instead, I went back to courses in English, Political Science, Economics, and Religious Studies. Musically, I continued to play in the Music School’s brass quintet.

I went on to continue my studies at Memorial, declaring a major in Religious Studies and a minor in Women’s Studies, and I loved my courses. As I was nearing the end of my Bachelor of Arts program, I began the application process for graduate school. I had chosen to apply for admission to collaborative programs in Women’s Studies and Religious Studies at the University of Toronto and the University of Ottawa. My area of research interest was the ethical dimensions of reproductive technologies, and I had the full support of three of the professors I had taken a number of my courses with. I had their glowing
recommendations in signed, sealed envelopes. As I was putting together my application packages, my younger sister said to me, “I think you should go back and finish your music degree.” She said that because she didn’t want me to move away for graduate school, but her remark had a tremendous emotional impact on me. I started to cry, and I knew that I should go back.

My return to Music School was indeed satisfying. I was still one of the top trumpet students, and I quickly made new friends (my others had already graduated). While the course requirements were still the same, I didn’t find them as boring anymore. Having taken courses in World History helped me contextualize the things I was learning about in my Music History courses. My background in Religious Studies helped me better appreciate the role of music in the early Church. My knowledge of Women’s Studies provided a foundation for exploring gendered aspects of music and gender stereotypes in opera. I was able to critically think because I had more to think about than the memorization of facts. I had a global context to which I could relate my studies in music.

I went on to finish my degrees in music and music education, and I began my teaching career in Calgary, Alberta. Eventually, I moved back to Newfoundland and taught in the rural community of Ferryland. I began graduate studies in Education in 2003 in the Teacher Development program at OISE/UT [the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto], where I completed my Master’s of Education. I am currently working towards a PhD in Music Education at the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto. (Personal narrative; July 2005)

There is no doubt that the complicated journey I have taken has played a substantial role in shaping the professional knowledge I bring to my classrooms as a teacher and as a learner. As a master’s student, I took the opportunity to shape many of my course papers around making sense of my professional identity as a music educator. Questions about my professional identity eventually led to questions about my professional knowledge as I began to surmise that it is what we know that informs who
we are. And that has brought me to this study, as I examine how the life experiences of three choral music educators have informed what they know about—that is, their professional knowledge of—music teaching and learning.

**Introducing the Research Context**

**Research Purpose**

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the professional knowledge of three choral music educators from St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador. Specifically, my intentions were a) to discover what constitutes the professional knowledge of each of the research participants as revealed through their life stories; b) to illustrate how such professional knowledge has been shaped by experiences throughout each of the participants’ lives; and c) to understand how the participants’ experiences of developing as educators within the specific social, cultural, and political contexts of Newfoundland and Labrador have shaped their professional knowledge.

Schutz (1967) states, “Meaning does not lie in the experience. Rather, those experiences are meaningful which are grasped reflectively. . . . The reflective glance singles out an elapsed lived experience and constitutes it as meaningful” (pp. 69-71). With this in mind, it was also my goal to engage the participants in a process of teacher development, understood as a process of “restorying of practice” (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005), as they discovered for themselves, through a narrative process of self-exploration, the meaning that could be made of the relationships between their life experiences and their knowledge of music teaching and learning. As Clandinin and Connelly (1995) posit, the construction and the telling of a story is an educative act for the storyteller.
Research Questions

The main questions that guided this study are as follows:

1. What constitutes the professional knowledge of three choral music educators, as revealed in the stories they choose to tell of their lives?

2. What life experiences, as revealed through their stories, have informed their professional knowledge?

3. How have the experiences of developing as educators within the specific social, cultural, and political contexts of Newfoundland and Labrador shaped their professional knowledge?

Defining Key Constructs

The following section defines the key constructs that contribute to the theoretical framework of this study.

Knowledge, understanding, and belief. Throughout this thesis, I use the words know/knowledge, understand/understanding, and believe/belief to describe various aspects of the participants’ professional knowledge.

“To know” and “to understand” are frequently used interchangeably in everyday speech. This connection has its roots in the classical conception of knowledge, whereby both “knowing that” and “knowing why” were inextricably linked (Williams, 2001). Inherent in my claims about the knowledge of the participants is the assumption that they also represent their understandings. In other words, accepting understandings as a “knowing why” type of knowledge, anything I posit as an aspect of professional knowledge should also be interpreted as representing professional understanding.
In terms of belief, I work with the assumption that knowledge and belief are completely intertwined (Lewis, 1990), regarding knowledge as the cognitive outcome of thought and belief as the affective outcome (Ernest, 1989). As beliefs influence how individuals characterize and make sense of the world (Pajares, 1992), I include participants’ beliefs, where relevant, as aspects of their professional knowledge.

**Life story.** As I began this study, I drew upon the definition of life story as put forward by Atkinson (1998):

A life story is the story a person chooses to tell about the life he or she has lived, told as completely and honestly as possible, what is remembered of it, and what the teller wants others to know of it, usually as a result of a guided interview by another. . . . A life story is a fairly complete narrating of one’s entire experience of life as a whole, highlighting the most important aspects. (p. 8)

The participants in this study did not choose to share the entire experience of their lives. Rather, all three participants, without prompting, chose to share what they considered to be the most meaningful stories of their life experiences, from childhood to present day, in the context of their personal understandings of their lives as musicians and music educators. The life stories that emerged reflect Chase’s definition of life stories: “narratives about some life experience that is of deep and abiding interest to the interviewee” (2003, p. 274).

**Professional knowledge.** Through this study, I work from the assumption that one’s knowledge of teaching and learning develops over the course of one’s life. This assumption is most informed by writings on professional knowledge by Goodson and Cole (1993) and Buckerfield (1997), which include the elements of personal, practical,
and pedagogical knowledge, but within a broader context than the classroom. Goodson and Cole write:

Personal practical knowledge or pedagogical content knowledge is only a part of teachers’ professional knowledge. This professional knowledge moves well beyond the personal, practical, and pedagogical . . . To define teachers’ knowledge in terms of its location within the confines of the classroom is to set limits on its potential and use. (pp. 71-72)

A teacher’s professional knowledge is situated in “the individual’s thoughts and behaviour within his or her personal biography and further locates the story of the individual within broader historical, social, and other circumstances” (Buckerfield, 1997, p. 15).

As I was looking to discover professional knowledge as revealed through the participants’ stories, this broadly conceived notion of professional knowledge resonated most with me. It was important for me to enter the participants’ professional knowledge landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) without a predetermined set of categories of professional knowledge to look for in the stories and practices of the participants. Rather, I was able to focus my analysis on the aspects of professional knowledge that emerged from the stories that the participants had chosen to tell.

**Self-knowledge.** I use the construct of the cognitive self to understand participants’ self-knowledge from a constructivist perspective (Kelly, 1955/1991; Markus, 1983). Such knowledge includes their understandings of their social identities, abilities, achievements, preferences, values, and goals.

**Teacher development.** This study is grounded in the assumption that teacher development is a process that occurs over the course of one’s life and is not confined to
formal processes such as university-based teacher education programmes, workshops, and in-service professional development days. I draw on the concept of teacher development as put forward by Goodson and Cole (1993):

> Our concept of teacher development is rooted both in the personal and the professional. We consider teachers as persons and professionals whose lives and work are shaped by conditions inside and outside of school. Events and experiences, both past and present, that take place at home, school, and in the broader social sphere help to shape teachers’ lives and careers. How teachers construe their professional realities and how they carry out their lives in classrooms is an ongoing process of personal and contextual interpretation. (p. 74)

**Values.** In chapters four through six, I discuss the core values of each participant. By value, I simply mean, “an idea that one treasures and lives by” (Jorgensen, 2008, p. 16).

**Significance and Contributions of Study**

In a review of research on the professional development of music educators in *The New Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning* (2002), Hookey includes “research on the personal professional lives of music educators” (p. 894), recognizing professional development as a process of personal professional change and as a lifelong project. Specifically, Hookey references Baker (1992), Duling (1992), and King (1998). Baker collected oral histories of three exemplary music educators, with a focus on exploring the role of significant experiences, influences, and relationships in their professional development. Baker’s findings emphasize the support of family and mentors as particularly influential in how each of the participants came to be music educators. Duling explored the development of pedagogical content knowledge of two exemplary general music educators and finds that there is a relationship between the
influences of childhood and mentors and the teaching traits of his participants. King (1998) provides a rich description of the personal and professional qualities of one exemplary music educator after 10 months of observations, interviews, and artifact collection. While King does not draw direct connections between the participant’s personal life and his professional qualities, he does provide a thorough description of the participant’s life history as a context for understanding the path that led him to his career as an esteemed music educator. While these studies endeavour to provide insights into the knowledge and attributes of exemplary music educators, they are also representative of a growing interest in exploring the role of the personal in the development of the professional within music education.

Beyond the research cited by Hookey (2002), the body of research exploring the personal and the professional within music education has continued to expand. Brenneman (2007), Knight (2006), Richardson (2006), and Robbins (2012) have each used the personal lives of their participants to explore various aspects of the professional lives of their participants. Brenneman explored the life experiences of three exemplary women choral conductors, with a specific focus on the influence of gender issues on their formative experiences. Knight examined how the values that have been derived from life experiences shape the philosophies, choral concepts, and rehearsal strategies of two prominent African-American choral conductors. Richardson looked at the role music plays in the lives of seven preservice educators, in part to help them make explicit elements of their emerging professional knowledge. Closely related to my thesis research is the work of Robbins, who engaged in a collaborative self-study with four other choral music educators—drawing upon life experiences, knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and
values—to make sense of how their understandings of the formation of their musical selves have shaped their professional practices. My thesis contributes to this body of research on the personal and the professional in music education, offering new understandings of how the professional knowledge of select choral music educators has been informed by their life experiences.

Through this study, my intention is to develop an understanding of both what may constitute the professional knowledge of music educators as well as how the professional knowledge of music educators is shaped by life experiences. This study illustrates that there are factors beyond those explicitly related to music and formal education to be considered when determining how one’s professional knowledge as a music educator has been shaped. Therefore, we need to look beyond music educators’ professional lives to get a fuller, clearer picture of how individuals develop their professional knowledge as music educators. Falling in line with the contributions made by narrative inquiries, this study offers a “new sense of meaning and significance” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 42) of the development of professional knowledge of music educators, as it assumes that music educators express their professional knowledge narratively, and it presents teacher development as an ongoing process that begins in childhood.

There is a focus on the voices of the participants throughout this study. Their thoughts, perspectives, and experiences are represented through extensive quotations in chapters four through six. This is significant, as music educators—particularly those who are conductors—are often publicly recognized for their roles on a podium and for how their ensembles perform on a stage. Through this study, I strive to honour my participants
for who they are in a holistic sense—not just as conductors, but as people too—and for what they think, believe, and value.

On a professional level, this study makes a contribution towards expanding the realm of possibilities for teacher development opportunities for music educators. Typically, music teacher development opportunities focus on applied matters, such as conducting workshops, repertoire reading sessions, and new curriculum in-services. Recognizing that “teaching and teacher development are rooted in the personal” (Cole & Knowles, 2000, p. 2) adds a valuable lens through which to view the music education landscape. While there is always room to improve aspects of professional practice such as conducting technique and teaching strategies, the reflective aspect of this thesis—reflecting on life stories as well as professional practice—provides a valuable form of teacher development, one that may be particularly appropriate for educators beyond the beginning years of their careers.

Narrative inquiry is an emerging orientation to research in the field of music education. An international conference on narrative inquiry in music education has been held bi-annually since 2006, and two edited collections of narrative inquiry in music education (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009; 2012) have been published. While the use of participant stories and narrative as a mode of representing data are common features of the research shared at both the conferences and in the anthologies, the research is not necessarily epistemologically grounded in a narrative understanding of experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). This study adds to the growing number of studies that understand narrative as both phenomenon and method
While not a primary focus of this study, this work tells meaningful stories about the choral music tradition that exists in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, a province that has a rich history of choral music education. The participants in this study are both products of and contributors to that history.

The process of conducting research for this study was one of personal and professional development for my participants as well as for me. In other words, it was a mutually beneficial endeavour. The narrative structure of chapters four through six may be particularly interesting to professionals in the field, as they will be able to relate to elements of the participants’ stories. This study may also contribute to the growth of (music) educators’ understandings of their own professional knowledge, as it provides points of resonance—“[ways] of seeing one experience in terms of another”—(Conle, 1996, p. 299) and presents living examples of theories in action, humanizing or demystifying the process of creating relationships between lived experience, theory, and practice.

**Boundaries of the Study**

This narrative inquiry was designed using interviews and observations to explore the life stories and professional knowledge of three choral music educators in St. John’s, the capital city of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. While my research findings are specific to the participants in this study and not meant to be generalized to all choral music educators, the implications and recommendations have broader applications to the field of music education.
The three participants in this study are choral music educators in a variety of school and community contexts in St. John’s. Each of the participants is female, born and raised in St. John’s, schooled in the former Roman Catholic School Board of St. John’s, and a music education graduate from Memorial University of Newfoundland. I share each of these characteristics with my participants, though these commonalities are all matters of coincidence and not of research design. The “insider” perspective I bring to the research context undoubtedly plays a role in how I have analysed the participants’ stories. While at once it has helped me relate to many of the experiences of my participants, it has also challenged me to find new ways of exploring the taken-for-granted aspects that lie within our similar experiences. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state, “We are not merely objective inquirers . . . who study a world we did not help create. On the contrary, we are complicit in the world we study. Being in this world, we need to remake ourselves as well as offer up research understandings that could lead to a better world” (p. 61).

My understanding of the professional knowledge of the research participants is limited to the professional knowledge that was revealed through the life stories that each participant chose to share. My understandings were further developed through observations of choral rehearsals, but with minimal time spent in each participant’s rehearsal context, the stories they chose to tell revealed the most about their professional knowledge.

While this research reveals my understandings of the professional knowledge of three specific choral music educators, I hope that readers of this study will be able to reflect upon their own life stories and experiences and develop a clearer understanding of their own professional knowledge, regardless of their field or discipline.
Overview of Thesis Structure

This study is presented in eight chapters. Chapters one through three establish the context for this study. Chapter one provides an introduction to the study. My reflective stories provide the reader with an understanding of a number of my life experiences that have shaped my professional knowledge, who I am as an educator, and who I am as a researcher. Further, they illustrate my personal connection to and interest in my research topic and questions. Chapter one also introduces the purpose, guiding questions, foundational constructs, significance, and boundaries of the research. Chapter two presents an overview of two types of literature that inform this study. The first discussion focuses on the theoretical literature that provides an epistemological and ontological framework for this study, while the second discussion focuses on studies related to this study in terms of topic and method of inquiry. Chapter three provides an overview of narrative methodology and the specific research design and procedures of this study.

Chapters four through six introduce each of the participants through narrative accounts of their life stories, consisting primarily of their own words, followed by an analysis and discussion of the professional knowledge that emerged through their stories. Pieces of my own stories as well as extant research literature are woven throughout the discussion to add to the complexity of understanding.

Chapters seven and eight delve further into the analysis of each of the participant’s stories, with chapter seven providing an interpretive discussion of the emergent themes, using a framework of resonance (Conle, 1996, 2000; Griffin, 2007; Samson, 1998). Chapter eight consists of an overview of the research findings as well as implications for professional development, music teacher education, and future research.
Chapter Two

This chapter is presented in two sections. The first section, “Theoretical Underpinnings” introduces the complex constructs of teacher knowledge and experience, as well as the philosophy of constructivism, which speak to the epistemological and ontological assumptions of this thesis. The second section, “Related Studies,” provides a survey of literature that relates to this study in terms of assumptions about the relationship between the personal and professional (music teacher identity), in terms of content (music teacher knowledge), and in terms of research method (narrative in music education).

Theoretical Underpinnings

Teacher Knowledge

Wilson, Shulman, and Richert (1987) propose a knowledge base for teaching as “the body of understandings, knowledge, skills and dispositions that a teacher needs to perform effectively in a given teaching situation” (p. 106). They further propose a framework for organizing this teacher knowledge base into seven domains: knowledge of content; knowledge of pedagogy; knowledge of curriculum; knowledge of learners and learning; knowledge of contexts and schooling; knowledge of philosophies, goals, and objectives; and pedagogical content knowledge. It is pedagogical content knowledge that has been the focus of many studies that have explored the experiential nature of teachers’ knowledge. Shulman (1987) defines pedagogical content knowledge as “the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how the particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction” (p. 8). In the context of music education, Duling
(1992) has examined the factors that influenced the pedagogical content knowledge of two exemplary general music teachers, and Gohlke (1994) studied the acquisition and development of pedagogical content knowledge in preservice teachers in a music methods course.

Also rooted in experience is Elbaz’s (1983) conception of practical knowledge, which includes five orientations: situational, personal, social, experiential, and theoretical. Within these orientations, Elbaz uses three terms to describe the qualities of practical knowledge: rule of practice, practical principle, and image. Lemons (1998) uses this framework to explore the images and contexts of two elementary music teachers’ practical knowledge.

Connelly and Clandinin (1985) built on Elbaz’s concept and coined the term personal practical knowledge, which they define as “knowledge which is imbued with all the experiences that make up a person’s being. Its meaning is derived from, and understood in terms of a person’s experiential history, both professional and personal” (p. 363). In later work, Clandinin (1986) proposed six dimensions of personal practical knowledge: the moral dimension, the emotional dimension, the personal private and educational professional dimension, the origin of image in experiences, the verbal expression of images, and the expression of images in practice. Bolden (2007) used this framework to study the personal practical knowledge of music teachers in relation to teaching composition.

Goodson and Cole (1993) propose a conception of professional knowledge that looks beyond the classroom as the context for teachers’ knowledge. Their understanding of professional knowledge takes into account the personal, the practical, and the
pedagogical, while locating it within a broader context that takes into account historical, social, and micro-political influences. From the outset, my approach to understanding the professional knowledge of the choral music educators in this study was most informed by Goodson and Cole.

**Experience**

I first encountered the work of Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin, through *Teachers as Curriculum Planners* (1988), when I began my graduate studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Since then, their work has played a pivotal role in the development of my own research ideas. In *Teachers as Curriculum Planners*, Connelly and Clandinin posit that curriculum “can become one’s life course of action. It can mean the paths we have followed and the paths we intend to follow” (p.1). They envision curriculum in a broad sense, as a person’s life experiences, as opposed to the narrower, yet commonly held notion of curriculum as a course of study. Embracing Connelly and Clandinin’s concept of curriculum has enabled me, through my own self-study work, to make sense of my lived experiences as a teacher and to better come to terms with how I envision music teaching and learning in a school context. With respect to my current research interests, I am most drawn to Connelly and Clandinin’s assertion that with respect to curriculum, it is the personal knowledge of teachers that “determines all matters of significance” (p. 4.).

In the foreword to *Teachers as Curriculum Planners* (1988), Eisner writes, “This book provides us with a reminder that it is more important to understand what people experience than to focus simply on what they do” (p. x). This statement resonates
strongly with me, particularly as I strive to shift focus away from what music educators do in performance and towards what they know through their lived experiences.

In 1962, Schwab and Brandwein published an enlightening volume, *The Teaching of Science*. In the chapter, “The Teaching of Science as Enquiry,” Schwab presents a scheme of curriculum determinants that he developed with Harold Dunkel. Within the context of proposing that the nature of science education be changed from one rooted in dogma to one rooted in enquiry, Schwab presents eight factors that should be taken into consideration when making decisions about curriculum. The eight factors are presented in four clusters, each having two facets—the perennial matters (leading to decisions about educational practices that would be relatively permanent) and ephemeral conditions (leading to decisions that would be subject to change as the curriculum determinants change). The four clusters, as presented by Schwab are a) the milieu, which constitutes the needs, demands, and conditions, as determined by social structures; b) the learner, taking into consideration the past, present, and future of the learners as well as their characteristics; c) the teacher, including professional and personal characteristics; and d) the subject matter.

Connelly, Clandinin, and Schwab, among many others, have been influenced by Dewey’s (1938/1997) writings on education and experience. Dewey writes that “all genuine education comes about through experience” (p. 25). It is this idea that informs my own approach to exploring the development of teachers’ professional knowledge. Dewey posits an organic connection between education and personal experience, a connection that I explore in light of the development of professional knowledge. As Dewey relates growth to educative experiences, I work under the assumption that
professional knowledge emerges through reflection on educative experiences both inside and outside of school contexts. Dewey defines an experience as a transaction that takes place between an individual and the surrounding environment. Once again, the role of context is a key element—one that plays a significant role in the development of this thesis inquiry.

**Constructivism**

Epistemological constructivism can be defined as “the view that we know only what we in some sense construct, make, produce, or otherwise bring into being as a necessary condition of knowledge” (Rockmore, 2005, p. 24). It is this view that frames my understanding of knowledge, and more specifically, teachers’ professional knowledge. While Dewey did not use constructivism as a frame for his work, reasonable links can be made between constructivist philosophy and his notions of knowledge and experience. For Dewey, knowledge is a mode of experience (1925/1981) and is demonstrated through the process of reflecting on experience, which informs future action (Vanderstraeten, 2002). In other words, knowledge acquired through experience is constructed (by the knower) through reflection. This also fits with a prominent constructivist view in education that new experiences are understood by linking them to past experiences (Rockmore, 2005)—we construct knowledge based on how we have experienced the world.

Constructivism speaks not only to the nature of knowledge, but to the nature of reality as well. If we can only know what we construct, it follows that our realities are constructed as well, informed by our experiences. Rockmore (2005) notes that all theories of knowledge “defend some sort of realism, but not necessarily metaphysical realism.”
Doyle (1997) takes up this issue to some extent in his defense of the use of story as a tool for acquiring knowledge about teaching, declaring truth as an “elusive goal” (p. 99).

As previously stated, one of the goals of this thesis research was to engage participants in a process of teacher development through the telling of their stories. The assumption that the process of telling stories would lead to growth as a teacher is a constructivist one, as knowledge is created through personal experiences and social interactions (Pelech & Pieper, 2010).

**Related Studies**

Through the following section, I provide an overview of the main bodies of literature that intersect the borders of this study. Initially, I was interested in exploring the relationship between the personal and professional development of preservice music teachers. Through my exploration of the literature, I discovered that a great deal of the work on the autobiographical nature of teaching had already explored the relationship between the personal and the professional in the context of the development of teacher identity. Sensing a research gap in the exploration of the interactive nature of the personal experiences and professional knowledge of inservice teachers, I shifted my focus.

Like Connelly and Clandinin (1999), I believe professional identities and professional knowledge are intimately connected. This thesis does not address participants’ teacher identities explicitly, but my research interests, questions, and methods have been informed by one particular group of music teacher identity studies that addresses the implicit connection between the personal and the professional. I present an overview of that group of studies in the following section. From there, I turn to research on music teacher knowledge. While the identity literature intersects with my
study with respect to assumptions about how we become who we are as teachers, the literature on music teacher knowledge intersects with my study with respect to what we know as music teachers. Finally, I provide an overview of narrative studies in music education. Narrative inquiry is not a set research method—one narrative inquiry can look quite different from another—but its popularity as an orientation to research in music education is growing quickly. This body of literature intersects with my study with respect to understanding experience through story.

**Music Teacher Identity**

Over the past thirty years, there has been considerable interest in the notion of music teacher identity. Indeed, a large number of paper presentations at the biannual International Symposia on the Sociology of Music Education have been dedicated to the topic. Woodford’s (2002) chapter in The New Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning provides a comprehensive review of the research on the social construction of music teacher identity in undergraduate music education majors.

The major studies that have been undertaken to examine issues surrounding music teacher identity can be roughly categorized into four groups. The first comprises of Bouij (1998), Cox (1994), L’Roy (1983), and Roberts (1991), who each examined the construction of music teacher identity among undergraduate music education majors through a symbolic interactionist framework, with a primary interest in the prominence of *musician* identities at the expense of *teacher* identities in that particular population.

Also grounding their work in symbolic interactionism are Broyles (1997), Schonauer (2002), and Wolfgang (1990), who I have identified as the second group. Like the scholars in the first group, Wolfgang and Broyles examined the experiences of
undergraduate music education students, while Schonauer investigated the experiences of in-service elementary school music teachers. The studies in this second group do not focus on issues of negotiating competing musician and teacher identities; rather their primary aim was to gain understanding solely of the teacher role development process. In these studies, unlike the first group, all participants were actively engaged in music teaching experiences, whether at the pre-service level or as professional in-service teachers.

I have classified the third group as those informed by constructivist theory, personal biography, and narrative inquiry. Bernard (2004), Lee (2004), and Prescesky (1997), approached their studies with an emphasis on gathering narratives of experience from their participants. Unlike the symbolic interactionist studies, this third group demonstrates the active roles that individuals play in co-constructing their own identities as musicians and teachers. The symbolic interactionist studies cited here did not fully acknowledge those roles, focusing primarily on the social interactions that construct what it means to be a musician and/or teacher. Prescesky and Lee worked with undergraduate music education majors, while Bernard worked with in-service elementary school music teachers.

The fourth group does not address teacher identity directly; rather it addresses teacher personality, which, it could be argued, comprises at least an aspect of identity. Kemp (1982) and Wubbenhorst (1992) examined personality characteristics of both music teachers and performers. Unlike the other studies I have cited here, Kemp and Wubbenhorst approached their research problems through the quantitative paradigm.
While useful for general theory-building, these studies do not reveal any aspect of the relational aspects of identity development (or construction).

It is the third group of studies that resonate with my current study, given their narrative orientation and their attention to the relationship between the personal and the professional. Danielewicz (2001) writes, “What makes someone a good teacher is not methodology, or even ideology. It requires engagement with identity, the way individuals conceive of themselves so that teaching is a state of being, not merely ways of acting or behaving” (p. 3). As I explored the work of Bernard (2004), Dolloff (1999a, 1999b), Lee (2004), and Prescesky (1997), it was that assertion from Danielewicz that was brought to mind. In this particular body of work, the researchers focus on the experiences of individuals as they engage in narrative processes of negotiating—or coming to understand—their identities as music teachers. While acknowledging the social forces that contribute to the construction of identities as music teachers, Bernard, Dolloff, Lee, and Prescesky also bring to light the roles individuals play in the construction of their own identities as music teachers.

Lee (2004) found story and autobiographical writing to be rich methodological tools in the course of her doctoral research. Lee, a music teacher educator, set out to research the shifts and extensions in musicians’ identities as they transformed to music teachers through their teaching practica. She found that some musicians in her study could overcome their conflicts (between musician and teacher) if they collaborated in the story-writing process—Lee wrote stories of her participants’ experiences and classified them as “creative non-fiction.”
Frustrated by the discourse surrounding music teacher identity, particularly that which focuses on the tensions between musician and teacher identity and the notion that the teacher identity should prevail over the musician identity, Bernard (2004) designed her doctoral thesis so that she could explore how music teachers who are also active musicians make meaning of their music making and their music teaching. Bernard investigated the experiences of six elementary school music teachers through intensive interviews, classroom observations, and post-observation interviews. She explored the teaching context as a site for ongoing identity construction and tapped into the musician-teachers’ understandings of their identities by engaging them in story-telling. Bernard’s main contribution is the recognition that identifying as a music teacher does not have to come at the expense of identifying as a musician. Identity, though it may be socially constructed, is still personal—Bernard’s research highlights that there are diverse ways in which musician and teacher identities may be felt, expressed, and enacted; and we do not necessarily need to attach value judgments to those expressions and enactments.

While examining the identities of music educators was outside the scope of this inquiry, my analysis of the participants’ knowledge of self points to a connectedness between professional knowledge and identity. Like Andrzejewski (2008) and Smith (2007), I believe we can better understand teachers’ practices through a holistic consideration of professional knowledge and identity.

**Music Teacher Knowledge**

Prior to the 1990s, research on music teacher knowledge was limited, with the bulk of the literature focusing on teaching skills as opposed to teaching knowledge. Research was conducted primarily through observation without including the thoughts,
concerns, and perspectives of the actual teachers being observed (Bresler, 1993). In the *Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning* (Colwell, 1992), the sections that most closely address teaching knowledge are “Teaching and Learning Strategies,” with a focus on teaching techniques, and “The Teaching of Specific Musical Skills and Knowledge in Different Instructional Settings,” with a focus on characteristics and teaching practices in domain-specific contexts (e.g., “Research on the Teaching of Singing,” “Research on the Teaching of Instrumental Music,” “Research on the Teaching of Elementary General Music,” and “Research on Teaching Junior High and Middle School General Music”). In the *New Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning* (Colwell & Richardson, 2002), teacher knowledge is addressed primarily through the lens of teacher education, in the section, “Music Teacher Education.” Within this section, Hookey’s chapter, “Professional Development,” includes one sub-section that provides a brief overview of early research on music teacher knowledge, separate from research on formal professional development, citing Baker (1992), Duling (1992), Goolsby (1996), and King (1998).

Carter (1990) states that teachers’ knowledge is “experiential, procedural, situational, and particularistic” (p. 307). It is not highly abstract or propositional, and it cannot be formalized into a set of specific skills. Further, she categorizes research on teacher knowledge into three main areas:

1. information-processing, with a focus on decision-making and/or differences between experts and novices;

2. pedagogical content knowledge, which is what teachers know about subject matter and how they translate that knowledge to students; and
3. practical knowledge, including personal knowledge, classroom knowledge, and knowledge about learning to teach.

I use these categories to provide an overview of representative studies within the realm of music teacher knowledge:

**Information-processing studies.** The information-processing studies pay particular attention to the decision-making of music educators and include comparative studies of experts and novices. Goolsby (1996, 1999) and Brittin (2005) fall within this category. Goolsby (1996) compared experts, novices, and student teachers with respect to the use of time in instrumental music rehearsals with an aim of developing effective instructional models. He built on this work with an expert-novice study (1999) on the preparation of band scores, with a goal of determining characteristics that may define successful, outstanding band directors. While these studies do not have a knowledge focus, Brittin’s work, informed by Goolsby, moves in that direction. Brittin conducted an expert-novice study on writing lesson plans for beginning instrumentalists. With a primary focus on the analysis of teaching strategies, Brittin sought to gain insights into the priorities of the music educators with reference to lesson content and structure. With a focus on how elementary general music teachers structure their musical knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, Anderson-Nickel (1997) conducted a comparative study of six teachers with less than five years of teaching experience and six teachers with five years or more of teaching experience. She used Berliner’s five-stage model of teacher expertise (as cited in Anderson-Nickel) to compare their attributes of expertise, which includes knowledge.
**Pedagogical content knowledge.** Recognizing a growing interest in researching the complex knowledge of teachers, Shulman (1986, 1987) established a framework for understanding teacher knowledge. Within the domain of content knowledge, he proposed three categories: subject matter content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and curricular knowledge. For Shulman, pedagogical content knowledge is “that special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding . . . [which] represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction.” (1987, p. 8) Within music education, the study of pedagogical content knowledge has received particular attention within the preservice context.

Duling (1992) explored the development of pedagogical content knowledge in two exemplary general music teachers, wishing to move beyond merely identifying characteristics and traits of exemplary teachers. While preservice teachers were not the focus of his study, the implications he draws are primarily for preservice music teacher education. Duling suggests that preservice coursework should prepare students for teaching through the study of learning theory, student characteristics, and a variety of probable teaching contexts; that preservice students should self-evaluate their abilities to demonstrate intensity, personal motivation, and organization—characteristics seen to be essential for becoming an exemplary teacher; and that preservice teachers should have practicum experiences in both the general classroom as well as the rehearsal room, in order to prepare them for diverse teaching experiences.
Looking directly at the preservice context, Gohlke (1994) studied the development of eight preservice music teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge within the context of a semester-long elementary music methods course, collecting data at the beginning, middle, and end of the 14-week semester. Gohlke found that preservice teachers “obtain pedagogical content knowledge” by assimilating knowledge from multiple sources, by directly applying knowledge from one context to another, and by transforming knowledge from one context to another. Further, she found that the primary sources of pedagogical content knowledge for the preservice teachers were prior performance-related music experiences and field observations of teachers, with knowledge from the music methods course playing a much lesser role.

The findings of Gohlke (1994) are reinforced in the work of Ballantyne (2006) and Ballantyne and Parker (2004), who turned to beginning inservice music teachers to determine the effectiveness of their preservice courses. They found that in order to prepare music educators for success in the early years of the profession, greater emphasis needed to be placed on the development of pedagogical content knowledge within the context of preservice music education courses.

Recognizing that pedagogical content knowledge develops through multiple sources, Haston and Leon-Guerrero (2008) observed preservice instrumental music teachers to see if they could identify pedagogical content knowledge being applied in their interactions with students and interviewed the preservice teachers to find out the sources to which they attributed their pedagogical content knowledge. Haston and Leon-Guerrero entered the study assuming apprenticeship of observation, methods classes, cooperating teachers, and intuition as the primary sources of pedagogical content
knowledge. While the overall conclusions of the study were limited, the researchers noted that with only two of six participants reporting the methods course as a primary source of pedagogical content knowledge, there was an indication that the methods course needs to be revised. This supports the findings of Ballantyne and Packer (2004), Conway (2002), Gohlke (1994), and Hodges (1982). Further, they recommend that “the roles of beliefs, philosophy, socialization, and personal histories . . . be considered in the development or revision of methods course curricula” (p. 58). Recognizing a shift towards constructivist and inquiry-based methods of teaching music, Haston and Leon-Guerrero also suggest consideration be given to reconceptualising what constitutes pedagogical content knowledge in music and how it may differ from the pedagogical content knowledge observed in more traditional rehearsal-model classrooms.

**Practical knowledge.** Research on music educators’ practical knowledge includes research on personal knowledge, classroom knowledge, and knowledge related to learning to teach. Carter (1990) uses the term practical knowledge to refer to “the knowledge teachers have of classroom situations and the practical dilemmas they face in carrying out purposeful action in these settings” (p. 299). While the information-processing studies have been used primarily to build understandings about the differences between novice and expert music educators, the practical knowledge studies have proven to be effective at building understandings related to the knowledge of experienced inservice music educators. Dolloff (1994) examined the development of expertise, which she equated with the term professional knowledge, in choral music educators through an in-depth study of a three-year inservice teacher development program. Dolloff’s work was informed by Elliott’s (1995) model of the professional music educator, which
considers expertise to be professional knowledge demonstrated through musicianship and educatorship. Eshelman (1995) also used Elliott’s model as a framework for her study of four exemplary general music educators. She studied the instructional knowledge of her research participants with a goal of discovering their common beliefs and practices as they relate to Elliott’s model of the professional music educator.

While Dolloff’s (1994) study is representative of knowledge about learning to teach, and Eshelman’s (1995) work is representative of a classroom knowledge study, Lemons’s (1998) study is representative of personal knowledge research. Lemons, informed by both Elbaz’s (1983) concept of practical knowledge and her use of images as a framework for representing practical knowledge, examined the influences of personal history and context on the practical knowledge of two elementary school general music teachers. Within the music teacher knowledge literature, the work of Lemons resonates closely to my own research, though her focus was on the enactment of knowledge as opposed to the development of knowledge. At the time, Lemons’s participant selection criteria were unique in the work on music teacher knowledge, as they were not based on any definition of exemplary, expert, or effective teacher. She was interested in discovering the “unique, interesting, and extraordinary” aspects of “regular or ordinary music teaching” (p. 9). This signals a shift in perspective of what may constitute valuable knowledge about music teaching and learning.

Tagg (1997) presents a case study of one elementary school vocal music teacher, Jane Rand, examining how Rand understands her role as a music educator. Tagg provides a rich description of Rand’s school context as well as a “day in the life” of Rand, illuminating her activities, perceptions, values, and her overall philosophy of excellence.
While Tagg does not use the term practical knowledge, her findings readily fit into this category of research. Tagg’s thorough description of Rand’s daily teaching life is akin to Clandinin and Connelly’s (1986) early work on personal practical knowledge, which highlighted the rhythms of teaching.

While not representative of a research study on music teacher knowledge, Durrant (2003), in his text, *Choral Conducting: Philosophy and Practice*, uses Elbaz’s (1983) concept of practical knowledge as a framework for describing the craft knowledge of choral conducting. Using Elbaz’s five orientations of practical knowledge, Durrant describes the craft knowledge of a choral conductor as a) situational—knowledge of context, the ensemble, the rehearsal space; b) personal—representative of the conductor’s philosophy and commitment; c) social—effective communication skills and understanding of the social factors that affect the group; d) experiential—the phenomenological nature of conducting informs decision-making; and e) theoretical—combination of academic and musical training, as well as developments in the choral and conducting worlds. Durrant states that choral conducting within the rehearsal context is essentially teaching; therefore his use of Elbaz’s framework for understanding teachers’ practical knowledge is particularly effective in highlighting the educative potential of the rehearsal, even when it occurs outside of a traditional education (i.e., school) context.

**Narrative in Music Education**

While narrative inquiry became a prominent orientation to educational research through the 1990s, it is still at the beginning stages in the field of music education, with most narrative dissertations and published research appearing from 2005 onward. This supports Welch’s (2009) assertion that music education has been “relatively slow” to
adopt methodological innovations. Though, as a quick survey of the literature seems to indicate, the appeal of narrative inquiry is catching on quickly. An international conference on narrative inquiry in music education has been held bi-annually since 2006, and two edited collections of narrative inquiry in music education (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009, 2012) have been published. Barrett and Stauffer suggest that

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. (p. 19)

Within the landscape of narrative inquiry in music education, a variety of perspectives and purposes are represented. It is for certain that there is no prescriptive method of carrying out narrative research—and individual inquirers enter their inquiry space with unique goals—but there appears to be a common underlying purpose of reconceptualising “the ways in which we think about music engagement, music education, and inquiry in music education” (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009, p. 1). In the following section, I provide an overview of the narrative landscape in music education, giving attention to four broad categories of narrative studies: a) those that seek to understand the experiences of a particular phenomenon; b) those that explore the construction of identity; c) those that use narrative methods as tools to understand the experiences of teachers; and d) those that use narrative as a collaborative research tool to enhance the understanding of professional knowledge.

**Experiences of a phenomenon.** Within music education, narrative inquiry has been used to explore how individuals—and sometimes groups—experience a particular phenomenon. Kroon (2009) used portraiture to analyse and represent her findings of a
study that sought to understand the work of a music teacher who is using music as a therapeutic device. While portraiture can be considered a distinct methodology in and of itself, it uses narrative techniques to collect, analyze, and represent data and subsequent findings, offering a rich description that pays particular attention to the aesthetics of the experience. Langston (2012) also employed narrative methods to collect and analyse data and to construct a narrative of one particular man’s experience of engagement—and his participation in the generation of and use of social capital—within a community choir.

Griffin (2007) and Clements-Cortés (2009) used narrative as a method of inquiry to understand individual experiences. In both cases, the researchers studied the experience of multiple individuals, not with the intention of generalizing experience, but to add to the complexity of knowledge gained in relation to the phenomenon of interest. Griffin explored how children experience music in their daily lives, both in school and outside of school. She became a participant-observer in a grade 2/3 classroom to understand the children’s experiences of music in school, and she delved into the musical lives of three girls outside of school, interviewing them, having conversations with them and with their parents. Grounded in an understanding of narrative as a phenomenon that people use to express themselves and to construct meaning and narrative as a powerful method of collecting, analysing, and representing data, Griffin constructed narratives of experiences of her participants as well as of herself. Throughout the dissertation, Griffin brings the reader inside her narrative as researcher. These side-by-side narratives contribute to insights into the musical lives of children as well as to insights into new ways of thinking about inquiry in music education.
Clements-Cortés (2009) used narrative methods to illuminate the experiences of four people nearing the end of life and their significant relations as they participated in music therapy sessions to facilitate relationship completion. Clements-Cortés was the music therapist in this study, and she used narrative methods to create rich, detailed stories of experience of each of her participants. Further, Clements-Cortés frames her study with a narrative that represents her experience of growth through the research process. Like Griffin (2007), Clements-Cortés provides the reader with insights into a particular phenomenon as well as valuable lessons about the transformative potential of narrative methods for the researcher.

Narrative inquiry can also be used to examine how a group experiences a particular phenomenon. Forehand (2005), as teacher-researcher, used narrative inquiry to understand how a class of grade four students creates an ensemble culture guided by creativity. Forehand’s use of narrative brings the reader into her inquiry space to explore a music education context that challenges the dominant paradigm of the traditional rehearsal model. Baker (2012) utilised narrative inquiry to study the forms of teaching and learning that occur within five garage bands of teenagers. Shedding light on what a narrative inquiry might look like, Baker’s chapter, “Learning in a Teen Garage Band: A Relational Narrative Inquiry,” focuses on illuminating the relational aspects of conducting a narrative inquiry. Baker’s perspective highlights the complexity of carrying out quality narrative research.

Construction of identity. In Shaping a Professional Identity: Stories of Educational Practice (1999), Connelly and Clandinin present a series of teachers’ and administrators’ “stories to live by,” illustrating the interconnectedness amongst
professional identity, knowledge, and context, as well as the usefulness of narrative inquiry to construct knowledge of that relationship. Within music education, narrative inquiry has been used to explore the construction of identity in musical contexts.

Cleaver (2009) studied the construction of the musical identity of “Jan Peterson,” a dedicated high school musician who participates in her school’s choir, vocal ensemble, and orchestra, in addition to her private studies in piano and voice. Cleaver determined that Jan’s musical identity has been constructed within “family relationships and home-space” (p. 39). In his chapter, “Storying the Musical Lifeworld: Illumination through Narrative Case Study,” Cleaver presents a vivid narrative portrait of Jan’s musical life, the role her family has played in nurturing her musical identity, and the “complexity, depth, and uniqueness” (p. 35) of the meaning Jan attaches to music.

While Cleaver examined relationships with family as a context for musical identity development, Hoffman (2008) explored the middle school band classroom as a social context for developing students’ identities, co-constructing six participants’ narratives of experience, based on journals, observations, artifacts, field notes, and classroom conversations. Unlike Cleaver (2009), who focused on the construction of musical identity, Hoffman focused on the construction of adolescent sense of self, within the band classroom in particular, and within the school context, more generally. In other words, Hoffman was interested in learning how the participants’ experiences of participating in band, within the social context of the band classroom, influenced their construction of identities within the middle school context at large.

Stepping outside of musical experience to musical non-experience, Whidden (2009) asked why there are adults who have designated themselves as non-singers.
Further, she inquired whether it is possible for the label to be reversed as the result of a positive singing experience, which she provided to each of sixteen participants through eight music lessons. Personal narratives of the participants provided the context for their self-identification as non-singers, while Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) concept of the three-dimensional inquiry space was used as a framework for analysis of participants’ experiences in the music lessons.

**Narrative as a tool for understanding the experiences of teachers.** The use of narrative inquiry to understand the lived experiences of music educators contributes to our overall knowledge of music teacher identity, knowledge, curriculum development, and classroom practices. Narrative inquiry provides participants with opportunities to share the beliefs, values, philosophies, and tensions that shape the decisions they make in their teaching contexts on a daily basis. Further, it provides readers with the opportunity to make sense of these beliefs, values, philosophies, and tensions while reading them in the words of the educators themselves.

Bolden (2007) used narrative methods to collect and represent data in his inquiry into what school music teachers know about teaching composing. Through Bolden’s rich, descriptive narratives, we gain insights into three music teachers’ personal understandings of their practices of teaching composing, and indirectly, we gain insights into how students may learn to compose.

Brenneman (2007) explored the lives of exemplary women choral conductors through narrative inquiry, with a particular focus on gender issues that may have influenced the participants’ formative experiences. Brenneman used a framework of a three-dimensional inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to co-construct—with her
participants—understandings of current teaching practices in light of past teaching, learning, and performing experiences.

Eyre’s (2009) dissertation presents her narrative inquiry into the factors that contribute to the ongoing development of professional identity in four elementary music educators at various stages of their careers, from a beginning teacher to a teacher with over 18 years of experience. Eyre collected stories of experience from her participants, observed their teaching to create stories of their teaching contexts, and introduces her participants to the reader through stories that have been constructed primarily through extended quotations from the research interviews. This study could also fit within the category of construction of identity, but a primary focus is on the participants’ understanding of their professional identities within their current teaching contexts. It is as much about understanding their teaching experiences as it is about understanding how their identities have been constructed.

Bolden (2007), Brenneman (2007), and Eyre (2009) have used narrative inquiry to understand the knowledge, experiences, and identities of experienced music educators and conductors. Schmidt and Zenner (2012) have used narrative as a mode of representation to present side-by-side stories that illuminate Zenner’s growth as a music educator from her preservice years through her first year of teaching. “The Childhood of a Teacher: Allison’s Preservice Years as Baby Pictures” provides reflective snapshots of Zenner’s experiences as a preservice teacher alongside Schmidt’s reflections on her experiences as Zenner’s music education professor and her supervisor for on- and off-campus teaching experiences. Their intertwining stories provide opportunities for each author to learn more about their own experiences through the perspective of the other,
and they provide readers with points of resonance that will no doubt shed light on their own early years as music teachers.

Aside from formal narrative inquiry projects, narrative techniques are also appearing in preservice music education classes as tools for developing reflective practice, restorying personal educational histories, and nurturing professional identity development. Blair (2012) and Adler (2012) each contributed chapters to *Narrative Soundings: An Anthology of Narrative Inquiry in Music Education*, sharing how they have used narrative assignments in their preservice classes.

Blair (2012) writes of her attempts to promote the development of thoughtful reflection on practice amongst her students. Despite individual feedback, scaffolding, and personal encouragement, Blair consistently found that her students demonstrated little growth in terms of their reflective writing. Inspired by the work of Burnard and Hennessy (2006), Blair offered new possibilities for reflective writing to her students, and collectively they chose to engage in a process of journaling with a partner. The reflective journals took the form of e-mail conversations, and the end of term assignment included a synthesis paper of the reflections, course readings, and field observations. Reading the extensive journal exchanges between pairs of students, Blair noted evidence of considerable development of “pedagogical thoughtfulness” (van Manen, 1991). While Blair initiated the collaborative journal project as a way to help her students, she also found that it helped her, as she learned more about each individual student and the issues that were causing her students the most concern.

Adler (2012), like Blair (2012), turned to narrative as a way of addressing challenges he was encountering in teaching an elementary music methods course. Faced
with the impossible task of preparing generalist teachers to teach grades one through six music in only eight weeks, Adler decided to change the goal of the course. Instead of preparing them solely to teach music, he would work to “reconnect preservice teachers with the music in their lives” (p. 163) in such a way that they would be supporters of music in their schools and find ways to incorporate music into their classrooms according to their personal levels of comfort and skill. In his chapter, Adler describes the various narrative assignments he uses to engage the preservice teachers in a process of self-discovery, and selected examples of completed assignments illuminate the very personal nature of people’s relationships to music. Adler also interweaves his narrative of the challenges of becoming a preservice teacher educator who employs narrative techniques in his methods course. His story reminds us that good narrative work reflects responsible and rigorous work.

**Narrative as a collaborative research tool.** In this section, I describe three studies that use narrative as a collaborative research tool. While a characteristic feature of narrative inquiry is the collaborative nature of the construction of the participant’s narrative of experience, Richardson (2006) and Robbins (2012) use narrative as a means of collaboration among participants, leading participants to new understandings of professional knowledge through the process of sharing their stories with each other throughout the research process. Griffin and Beatty (2012) present a shared narrative that documents and illuminates their informal faculty mentoring relationship and the development of their collaborative writing partnership.

Like Adler (2012) and Blair (2012), Richardson (2006) used narrative inquiry in a preservice music education context. In Richardson’s dissertation, she describes how she
designed a collaborative narrative inquiry to engage seven preservice elementary school teachers in a process of storying the role of music in their lives. As the professor teaching their preservice music course, Richardson’s goal was to help them understand what they know about teaching music, as they moved from the position of those being taught to the position of those who teach. Through the inquiry, participants shared their stories of experience with each other in group settings, and they dialogued with Richardson through journal reflections and everyday in- and outside of class exchanges. Richardson used narrative as a pedagogical method, as a research method, and as a mode of representation, using multiple data sources to restory the participants’ narratives of musical experience. Like Griffin (2007) and Adler (2012), Richardson’s reflections throughout the research text provide insights into the narrative process from the perspective of a developing narrative inquirer, strengthening the reader’s understanding of this newly emerging orientation to inquiry in music education.

Robbins (2012) used the dialectical and collaborative nature of narrative inquiry to explore yet another newly emerging methodology—collaborative self-study. Informed by narrative, reflexive inquiry, life history, and collective biography, Robbins and her co-participants delved into the highly personal work of self-study, all the while sharing their reflections on and understandings of experiences with each other. What emerged was a set of incredibly rich narratives that illuminate how the professional practices of five choral music educators have been shaped by the complexity of their musical selves. Robbins’s work exemplifies how narrative methods, within the context of a collaborative self-study, can be powerful tools for personalized professional development.
Griffin and Beatty truly embrace the collaborative nature of narrative inquiry, acknowledging their equal contributions by authoring their shared work as “Shelley M. Griffin = Rodger J. Beatty.” In “Hitting the Trail Running: Roadmaps and Reflections on Informal Faculty Mentorship Experiences” (2012), Griffin and Beatty use a framework of personal practical knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) to reflect on the development of their informal mentorship relationship within a theoretical context. Their collaborative narrative illustrates how the roles of mentor and mentee began to oscillate as Beatty (originally the mentor) and Griffin (originally the mentee) learned from each other. Also embedded in this narrative is the story of how their collaborative writing partnership began. Griffin and Beatty could have simply co-written a reflection of the development of their mentorship relationship, and it would have represented a narrative of their shared experience. Instead, situating their narrative within a framework of epistemological and ontological assumptions and a theoretical understanding of personal practical knowledge, exemplifies a rigorous narrative inquiry of their shared experiences.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presents an overview of the literature that underpins the epistemological, ontological, and methodological assumptions of my thesis inquiry. The first section of the chapter provides an overview of the complex constructs of teacher knowledge and experience, as well as the philosophy of constructivism, which underpin the theoretical framework of this study. The second section of this chapter provides a survey of the literature related to music teacher identity, music teacher knowledge, and narrative in music education, three areas of music education research that have informed this thesis.
Chapter Three

“The truth about stories is that that’s all we are.” (King, 2003, p.153)

The Significance of Stories

Glesne (2006) stresses that a researcher’s method of inquiry needs to be determined by more than the research question: A researcher’s epistemological and ontological values and assumptions need to inform the appropriate methodological choice—how a researcher conducts an inquiry needs to match the researcher’s personal views of “seeing and understanding the world” (p. 5). Stories lie at the heart of this narrative inquiry—as phenomenon, as method, and as mode of representation. Throughout my life, stories have played a significant role in how I understand the world.

Some of my earliest memories are of experiences listening to stories. My grandmother, “Nan,” would sing, “Charlie Brown went downtown . . .” as she rocked me on her lap in my parents’ kitchen. As I was younger than two years old at the time, I do not recall the words that followed, but I remember the feeling of anticipation, and I remember the feeling of closeness. Each time Nan began to sing that song, I wondered what events “downtown” would hold for Charlie Brown that day. I believe that was my first realization that a story could be told through song. More significant was the relational aspect of Nan singing me those stories—the close bond I shared with Nan began in that kitchen chair, listening to her stories, as she rocked me to sleep. Kellas (2010) states, “[Storytelling] not only helps us make sense of family experiences, but also performs, creates, and shapes family relationships as well as individual and cultural identities” (p. 3). Through that early experience, I constructed an understanding of who Nan was as my grandmother. As I grew older, storytelling continued to play an important
role in our relationship, as I would sit in her kitchen, sharing my stories with her—stories about my friends, about school, about my future plans. Nan’s interest and willingness to listen and respond to my stories helped me understand and gain confidence in my place in the world.

Written stories have also played a significant role in how I have constructed meaning of the world in general, and specifically, how I have made sense of my own experiences in the context of the lives of others. I became a voracious reader at an early age, and from the beginning, I chose to read stories that would allow me to escape to other worlds. One of my favourites was a small square book, *The Lives of Women Saints*. Another was a large hardcover book with a white cover, *Biblical Stories for Children*, which I also used as the basis of my lessons when playing school with my younger brother and sister. Those stories shaped my moral understanding of the world. Later, delving into chapter books, I embraced the *Little House on the Prairie* series by Laura Ingalls Wilder; *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl; The Story of My Life*, Helen Keller’s autobiography; and *Karen*, the biography of Karen Killilea, written by her mother, Marie Killilea. Each of these books provided me with insights and understandings of the lived experiences and familial relationships of adolescent girls, who lived in different parts of the world, through different periods of history, and with a diverse range of personal challenges. Through these written texts, I began to understand and appreciate difference in the lives of others, and while I would not have framed it as such at the time, I began to question my position of privilege.

From the age of five, Laura Ingalls Wilder would help her parents harvest crops and butcher animals to feed the family. Anne Frank went into hiding with her family
during the Holocaust, and she eventually died in a concentration camp. Helen Keller
overcame challenges of being unable to see, hear, or speak to become an author and
political activist. Karen Killilea was born in 1940 and developed cerebral palsy as an
infant. Her parents chose to raise her at home, rather than send her to an asylum, which
had been common practice at the time. Karen’s parents tirelessly searched for a doctor
who would work with their daughter, and she eventually learned to walk with the use of
crutches. The stories of each of these girls have remained with me since childhood, and
they each contain important lessons about equity and diversity, principles that ground my
personal values and my professional practice. Growing up in a white, middle-class
neighbourhood, and attending a relatively homogeneous all-girls Catholic elementary
school, I would not have otherwise learned these lessons so early in life. Further, the
written format of these stories has allowed me to revisit them at various points in my life,
reread them and construct new meanings and understandings of the world, as my life
experiences have changed.

My fascination with the written stories of the lives of girls was a catalyst for my
interest in recording my personal stories in written form. From the age of five, I shared
stories of my daily life with family members and pen pals through written letters. From
the age of twelve, I have kept personal diaries and journals as a means of processing
personal challenges. Through my personal writing, I restory my lived experiences, and I
reflect on my experiences to make sense of them and to re-vision future actions. To this
day, I revisit my writings, usually around the new year, constructing new meanings of
who I am, who I fear becoming, and who I wish to become (Diamond, 1983).
The sharing of stories has played an important role in my classroom teaching as well. When I was a classroom music teacher, I began my classes with a sharing circle. I would spend the first ten minutes of each class inviting students to share stories with the whole group. Unlike most classroom teachers, as the music teacher, I saw my students less than two hours per week. Making the most of the relational aspect of storytelling, I used the sharing circle to get to know my students’ stories of experience and to create a sense of community in my classroom.

Creating and sharing knowledge through stories resonates deeply with me. There is no doubt that I enjoy engaging with and learning about the lives of others—and the world—through stories. Further, I use stories to interpret and make sense of the world around me. Using stories as a focal point of this narrative inquiry has made both methodological and personal sense for me.

As a graduate student, I was immediately drawn to Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) argument that narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience and their assertion that “educational experience should be studied narratively” (p. 19). In this inquiry, through the sharing of life stories, participants engaged in a process that required them to look inward at the personal, to look outward at their environment, and to look backward and forward to the past, present, and future. Through this process, participants engaged in a process of restorying their professional knowledge as choral music educators.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) write that “the study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world. . . . People by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell
stories of them, and write narratives of experience” (p.2). My interest in understanding the relationship between life stories and professional knowledge also relates to the foundations of narrative inquiry: “The act of telling one’s story is an act of creating one’s self” (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995, p. 129). This acknowledges the subjective nature of telling stories—stories that are told to attach meaning to one’s life may be (and in fact, will be) told differently with different audiences or when told at different times or with different purposes. As Atkinson (2007) states, “Life stories told seriously and consciously are timeless; settings, circumstances, and sometimes meanings change, but motifs remain constant across lives and time” (p. 241). This is in keeping with my own perspective on reality, in that it is ever-changing and context-dependent. My aim through this inquiry has not been to discover the nature of the experience itself, as in a phenomenological approach, but to discover the meaning that is made through understanding the experience in the context of the participants’ life stories. As Atkinson states, “Life stories make connections, shed light on the possible paths through life, and lead us to our deepest feelings, the values we live by, and the commonalities of life” (p. 241).

**Narrative Inquiry**

Returning to Glesne’s (2006) position that research questions, epistemological and ontological assumptions of the researcher, and methodology are interconnected, my choice of research methodology was relatively straightforward. In terms of research questions, I was interested in the life stories of choral music educators. In terms of epistemological assumptions, I bring an understanding that knowledge is constructed through experience. In terms of ontological assumptions, I understand that reality is individual and contextual, that we construct our realities as we construct knowledge,
primarily through reflection on experience. Underlying each of those assumptions is the key assumption to narrative inquiry—experience happens narratively (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In the early stages of my work, I had considered life history as an appropriate methodology. After all, it was the life stories of the choral music educators in which I was interested. Through graduate course work with Professor Ardra Cole, the distinctions between life history and narrative became clearer, and her assertion that the research question, unit of analysis, and methodology need to be inextricably linked enabled me to confidently position myself as a narrative inquirer. In my inquiry, the unit of analysis is not the life as a whole, but the stories of experience told within the context of a life.

What is narrative inquiry? While I position myself as a narrative inquirer, there is no universal understanding of what that actually means. Narrative inquiry and narrative research are terms that mean different things to different people, and that lack of certainty can make people uncomfortable. For some, it weakens the legitimacy of narrative as a distinct methodology. As Spector-Mersel (2010) points out, “Just as the term narrative ‘has come to mean anything and everything’ (Riessman & Speedy, 2007, p. 428), it often seems that this is the case for narrative research also” (p. 205). Though stories and narratives are common features to all narrative inquiry, not all research that uses stories or narratives is narrative research. Phenomenology, ethnography, and life history are examples of research methodologies that commonly employ stories or narrative. However, they cannot be equated with narrative inquiry, as each of these

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1 The terms narrative inquiry and narrative research will be used interchangeably, following common practice in narrative literature and Clandinin’s (2007) acceptance of these terms as interchangeable in the Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology.
qualitative methodologies focuses on a different unit of analysis. “Narrative inquiry embraces narrative as both the method and the phenomena of study. . . . Narrative inquiry begins in experience as expressed in lived and told stories” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 5). For narrative inquiry, while actual research methods may vary, the unit of analysis is the story, and it is story that accounts for human experience.

**A subtype of qualitative inquiry?** Chase (2005), while acknowledging the difficulty of pinpointing a generally accepted definition of narrative inquiry, characterizes narrative inquiry in a broader sense than Pinnegar and Daynes (2007), describing it as “an amalgam of interdisciplinary analytic lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches, and both traditional and innovative methods—all revolving around an interest in biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them” (p. 651). Demonstrating the diversity of narrative inquiry, as informed by various disciplines, Chase outlines five major approaches in contemporary narrative inquiry.

The first is rooted in psychology, with a focus on how individuals’ life stories affect the quality of their lives. The second is rooted in sociology, with a focus on the construction of identity, understanding narratives as lived experience. The third is also rooted in sociology, but with a focus on discourse and linguistic patterns in the stories individuals tell about their lives. The fourth is rooted in anthropology, sometimes classified as narrative ethnography. Bridging the traditions of ethnography and life history, the researcher engages in a particular culture or community for an extended period of time and presents an account of the research that integrates both the experience of the researcher and the experience of the researched. Finally, the fifth approach is
rooted in autoethnography, in which “researchers write, interpret, and/or perform their own narratives about culturally significant experiences” (Chase, 2005, p. 660).

Though Chase (2005) does not claim to be “comprehensive or exhaustive” in her categories, the absence of educational research in the discussion is worth noting. Further, the inclusion of research classified as ethnography is debateable. When compiling the Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology (2007), Clandinin and her editing team did not include any narrative work that was considered phenomenology, ethnography, or generally interpretivist, if the researcher did not label it as narrative inquiry or narrative research.

A methodology? My research is grounded in an understanding of narrative inquiry as developed in the context of educational research by Clandinin and Connelly (1989, 2000). Also working from this understanding, Leavy (2009) writes,

Narrative inquiry attempts to collaboratively access participants’ life experiences and engage in a process of storying and restorying in order to reveal multidimensional meanings and present an authentic and compelling rendering of the data. . . . Narratives are constructed out of the data through a reflexive, participatory, and aesthetic process. (pp. 27-28)

Clandinin (2010) defines narrative inquiry in a nutshell: “Narrative inquiry is the study of people in relation studying the experiences of people in relation” (p. 2). Underpinning this definition is a Deweyan understanding of experience as transactional: “It is a changing stream that is characterized by continuous interaction of human thought with our personal, social, and material environment” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 39).

Guided by the assumptions that professional knowledge develops through one’s life experiences and that to make meaning of an educator’s professional knowledge, one
must understand the larger context in which it has emerged, I ground my work in assumptions of narrative and experience as expressed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000). “Life . . . is filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities” (p. 17). Further, “experience happens narratively. Narrative inquiry is a form of narrative experience. Therefore, educational experience should be studied narratively” (p. 19).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) highlight five features of narrative inquiry that contributed to the development of this inquiry:

1) Temporality: It is imperative to locate “things” in time. As I considered the experiences that participants shared through their stories, I was mindful that each has a past, a present, and an implied future. I developed an understanding of what each participant’s professional knowledge is as they expressed it in the present, where it came from (past), and where it may lead (future). Further, I worked with the assumption that my interpretation of the participants’ stories exists in the present, has been shaped by my past experiences, and will shift should I revisit them in the future.

2) People: There is an assumption that people are constantly in a process of change, and therefore, any person’s story must be narrated in terms of process. In this inquiry, the introductory narratives of each participant pay particular attention to life changes and infer that future change is inevitable.

3) Action: Any action must be viewed as a “narrative sign.” Through my conversations and interviews with each participant, I gained an understanding of their narrative histories, which I was able to use to interpret any actions I observed in their
rehearsal contexts. Before I could attach specific meaning to any action, I had to interpret the action through my narrative understanding of the participant.

4) Certainty: There can be no certainty attached to a narrative inquirer’s interpretation of events. The interpretation is always subjective and could always be something other than what is expressed. Integral to this inquiry are the acknowledgements of my autobiographical connections to this work and that my lived experiences shape my interpretation of the participants’ stories as told and actions as observed.

5) Context: Acknowledging and considering multiple contexts is an integral aspect of making meaning within a narrative inquiry. Temporal, spatial, relational, and social contexts cannot be ignored when constructing the narrative of participants’ experiences and when analysing and interpreting their narratives for meaning. As I listened to, read, and interpreted the participants’ stories, I was attentive to the various contexts that were presented. They situated their stories in different periods of their lives; in multiple geographic locations; in relation to various groups of people—primarily family, teachers, colleagues, students; and in multiple social contexts—at home, at school, traveling with choirs, in diverse choral milieus and rehearsal spaces.

fundamental elements of a paradigm—ontology, epistemology, and methodology—as a framework, Spector-Mersel posits:

The narrative approach entails a distinct type of research, but over and above that it comprises a clear vision of the social world and the way we think, feel and conduct ourselves in it. At the present stage of its development, the narrative approach forms nothing less than a paradigm. (p. 209)

Spector-Mersel (2010) proposes the narrative paradigm in light of six dimensions: ontology, epistemology, methodology, inquiry aim, inquirer posture, and participant/narrator posture. The following chart summarizes her argument for considering narrative a unique interpretive paradigm:

| Ontology | Informed by constructivism and postmodernism  
 Specific to narrative paradigm: focus on storied nature of human experience; social reality as narrative reality |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Epistemology | Rooted in constructivist assumptions that knowledge is subjective and culturally rooted  
 Specific to narrative paradigm: we shape and interpret reality through stories; narrative is an organizing principle |
| Methodology | Focus on stories  
 Two basic principles:  
 1) Story is the data and the unit of analysis  
 2) Holistic narrative analysis (multidimensional analytical lens; stories as whole units; regard for form and content of stories; consideration of context) |
| Inquiry Aim | Wide range of aims: psychological, sociological, anthropological, historical  
 Often focus on self-narratives, life stories in particular |
| Inquirer Posture | Researcher and phenomenon of inquiry are inseparable  
 Narratives are co-constructed by virtue of researcher presence |
| Participant/Narrator Posture | Participants are narrators at the centre of the inquiry, also inseparable from the phenomenon under inquiry  
 Collaborate with researcher, offering input on the research texts |
Spector-Mersel (2010) presents her argument for narrative as a paradigm as a starting-point for debate, and I agree there is room for debate. While her framework makes it easier to classify research as narrative or as something else (e.g., phenomenology) and to minimize the interpretation of narrative research as meaning “anything and everything” (Riessman & Speedy, 2007, p.428), I find that the term methodology is being used in place of methods, meaning little more than research procedure. While she takes issue with Clandinin’s (2007) classification of narrative inquiry as a methodology, inherent in that methodology are the ontological and epistemological assumptions that Spector-Messel outlines. Nonetheless, it is a starting point, and I believe she achieves her goal of providing a framework for classifying narrative research.

**Principles guiding the inquiry.** Given the close—and sometimes overlapping—relationship between life history and narrative methods, particularly with respect to the relationship between researcher and participant, as a researcher, I used principles put forward by Cole and Knowles (2001) as life history researchers to guide my work:

To focus on developing the personal and professional qualities of relationality, mutuality, and empathy, as well as care, sensitivity, and respect is, for us, both emblematic of and crucial to life history researching . . . Such conditions invariably will yield rich information and insights. These are the conditions that elevate the representations of the researching process and analyses into richly evocative, experience textured, relationally authentic, and meaningful “texts.” (p. 26)

Narrative inquiry is rooted in collaborative inquiry (Beattie, 1995). The narratives of experience presented in this thesis have been collaboratively constructed by the research participants and me, the researcher of the stories. In narrative inquiry, the value
placed on not only the experiences of the participants, but on the voice of the participants, has been of particular importance to me, as I endeavoured to create a research process that was mutually beneficial as a means of personal and professional development. Applicable to life stories, Woods (1987) asserts that “life histories, because of their special qualities in revealing the self, have an important role to play in the construction of a meaningful, relevant, and living teacher knowledge” (p. 136). Through the collaborative nature of this inquiry, participants, researcher, and readers come to a better understanding of the participants’ (as well as their own) professional knowledge. In Hatch and Wisniewski’s (1995) questionnaire on the distinctions between life history and narrative, one of the respondents, William Ayers², captured the significance of emphasizing the voices of participants:

> Life history and narrative approaches are person centered, unapologetically subjective. Far from a weakness, the voice of the person, the subject’s own account represents a singular strength. Life history and narrative are ancient approaches to understanding human affairs—they are found in history, folklore, psychiatry, medicine, music, sociology, economics, and of course, anthropology. (p. 118)

**Narrative Inquiry: Summary**

In determining the appropriate research methodology for this study, my ontological and epistemological assumptions, as well as my personal interest in the phenomenon of telling stories led me to narrative inquiry. While narrative inquiry continues to be an emergent orientation—or even a paradigm—with multiple approaches that tend to be rooted in disciplines, this thesis inquiry is grounded in Clandinin and

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² William Ayers is retired from the University of Illinois at Chicago, where he held the titles of Distinguished Professor of Education and Senior University Scholar.
Connelly’s (2000) conception of narrative inquiry as relational inquiry with a narrative understanding of experience.

**Research Design**

In this section, I outline the research design, procedures, and method of analysis I employed for this study.

**Participants.** At the outset of the design of this inquiry, my interest was in exploring the relationship between life stories and professional knowledge of music educators, but not necessarily *choral* music educators, and not necessarily music educators from Newfoundland. I had one choral music educator in mind, who I was particularly hopeful would participate, and I compiled a list of other music educators I would potentially approach once I found at least one willing participant.

Kate was the first person I thought of when I began to envision this inquiry. As will be revealed in chapter four, Kate was my first (informal) music teacher, who I had known since I was three years old. This was a small part of my interest in her. Beyond that, once I had moved to Toronto for graduate school, upon learning I was from Newfoundland, many local music educators would ask, “Do you know Kate?” Kate had taught for several years in Toronto, and clearly she had left a lasting impression. Further, when I talked about my thesis ideas with music educators and music education students in St. John’s, many of them said, “Oh, you should ask Kate to be in your study!” Kate was well-respected in Toronto and St. John’s, and given the special role she had played in my own development as a musician, I thought she would be a wonderful person with whom to begin my inquiry. As I was developing my thesis proposal, I had the good fortune of running into Kate in Toronto. She was attending a choral festival when I
bumped into her. As many people did at that time, she asked me about my thesis topic. I told her I wanted to explore the relationship between people’s life stories and their professional knowledge as music educators. In an instant, Kate told me she loved the idea and thought it was an important topic. I immediately asked her if she would be interested in participating, and she very graciously told me that she would love to be part of the study. Since Kate was a choral music educator in St. John’s, Newfoundland, I decided that limiting participant selection to other choral music educators from St. John’s could potentially lead to an interesting discussion of intersecting narratives, in the context of their area of specialization (choral music) and their socio-cultural location (St. John’s, Newfoundland). Situating my research in St. John’s held significance for me as well, as much of my own life story is rooted in that city.

I did not recruit additional participants until my proposal had been approved and I had been given ethical clearance from the University of Toronto. Once I was permitted to formally recruit participants, I sent letters of invitation to four choral music educators (including Kate) in St. John’s. I chose the four educators based on the professional rapport I had previously established with each of them when I was an undergraduate student at Memorial University. Initially, all four educators agreed to participate. I was satisfied that three to four participants would be an appropriate number to achieve the depth of description and analysis necessary to explore my research questions and present meaningful findings.

Once I had identified the participants, and before delving into the actual gathering of data, I met informally with each of them to negotiate the parameters of the research process. These preliminary meetings also served as an opportunity to develop a rapport
with the participants, so they would feel comfortable sharing their experiences with me. Given the extensive nature of the research process, I wanted to do as much as I could to ensure the participants were willing to commit to the various stages of the process and fully inform them of confidentiality and other ethical issues. Participants needed to be willing to commit to a study period of approximately eight months, which included three to four ninety-minute interviews, choral rehearsal observations, and reading transcripts and draft narrative profiles. After the preliminary meetings, one of the four educators who had been invited to participate decided not to continue any further, as she was concerned about not having enough time to fully engage with the study. The three other educators agreed to continue, and I obtained their informed consent through a signed document. In negotiating the research relationship, I endeavoured to convey a relaxed and informal atmosphere so that the participants felt secure in sharing their voices with me and in welcoming me into their teaching contexts.

The participants in this study acknowledged and accepted that it would be difficult—if not impossible—to protect their identities from readers within certain music education communities. However, in an effort to provide a semblance of privacy within the broader community that may read this thesis, each participant chose her own pseudonym to be used throughout the study. Further, the names of the participants’ schools, teachers, colleagues, students, and family members were changed to help protect the participants’ identities. In the case of significant public figures, I present their real names in the thesis text. In order to better relate to the participants with their new names, I consistently used their pseudonyms in my field notes, my research journal, the interview transcripts, as well as the thesis document.
Interviews. In-depth interviews provide the data that lies at the heart of this study. Seidman (1998) writes, “Interviewing affirms the importance of the individual without denigrating the possibility of community and collaboration” (p. 8). A series of three to four in-depth interviews with each participant enabled me to gain understandings of the experiences of my participants and the meanings they have made of their experiences. I drew upon Seidman’s structure for in-depth interviewing to provide the framework for the four sets of interviews. Each interview consisted of open-ended questions that engaged the participants in reconstructing their experiences and articulating their professional knowledge within the context of developing as choral music educators. Interviews ran for approximately 90 minutes each. The first and second interviews addressed focused life history, in which the participants were asked to restory their lives, from childhood to the present, in the context of becoming music educators in St. John’s, Newfoundland. Particular attention was paid to relevant social and cultural aspects of Newfoundland history and how they intersected with the participants’ lives. Rather than attempting to discover why they have become music educators, my focus was on uncovering how they had become music educators.

The purpose of the third interview was to gather details of the participants’ everyday lived experiences as choral music educators. Through this interview, participants were given the opportunity to share stories of their present-day teaching practices and beliefs. Attention was paid to the social context of the participants’ experiences, particularly in terms of the relationships the participants have with their school communities, parents, students, colleagues, and administrators.

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3 I interviewed only one of the participants—Kate—four times. For Katherine and Callie, I used the third interview to address the intended purposes of the third and fourth interviews.
The fourth interview provided participants with an opportunity to articulate the meanings they make of their experiences as music educators. Participants were asked to describe their understandings of their roles as educators, generally, and as music educators, specifically. I was also interested to learn about the future goals of the participants as they relate to their understandings of their past and present experiences as music educators.

As I also spent time in each of the participants’ choral rehearsal settings, the interviews provided opportunities for me to connect my observations of the participants’ teaching practices to the knowledge of teaching articulated by each of the participants. I digitally recorded and transcribed each of the interviews. As I transcribed each interview, I kept a running record of notes, questions, and emerging themes in the margins, which comprised a field text on its own and contributed to the preliminary analysis of the data.

**Observations.** Data was also drawn from choral rehearsal observations. I recorded my observations as field notes in a dedicated notebook. These observations enhanced my understanding of the participants’ narratives, as I was observing embodied knowledge in action. Observing their rehearsals assisted me in my understanding of the relationships between the personal and the professional that they had expressed in the initial interviews. They also helped me identify points of tension, events, and issues to address in subsequent interviews.

While spending countless hours in rehearsals could have provided me with a wealth of data, the focus of my inquiry is not as much what goes on in the classroom as what stories the choral music educators chose to share of their life experiences. I spent approximately five hours in each of the participants’ rehearsal contexts, and my entry into
each of the rehearsal spaces was negotiated on an individual basis. There is no doubt that spending more time in each of the participants’ rehearsal contexts could have led to richer narratives, especially since each participant directed multiple ensembles, but I was not able to observe each participant in all of their ensemble environments. Scheduling time for observations was particularly challenging, as I was never in St. John’s for more than two weeks at a time during my research visits. Had I been living in St. John’s for the duration of the data collection period, it would have been easier to gain access to rehearsals on an ongoing basis. However, even with limited access, gaining a sense of what the participants looked like in action undoubtedly enriched my understanding of their stories.

Making sense of the data. Data for this inquiry was gathered through interviews and observations, which were used to create field texts (transcripts, observation field notes, and researcher journal reflections) that were used as the basis for ongoing analysis and interpretation. I digitally recorded and then transcribed each interview. I completed most transcriptions as close to the actual interview time as possible, which enabled me to get inside the data from an early stage in the research process. Hearing the participants’ voices over and over again was especially helpful in becoming attuned to the inflections and emotional nuances that each participant brought to her story. As I observed each of the participants in their various rehearsal contexts, I took notes that focused on setting, relational aspects of each rehearsal, as well as content. Throughout the data collection process, I kept a traditional journal as well as notes in the margins of the transcripts, reflecting on the interviews and observations and flagging topics for future follow-up. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) regard the journal as a field text that enables the
researcher to tell stories of the research experience. Combined with field notes, the journals “provide a reflective balance” (p. 104). Finally, informal conversations with choristers and an unsolicited e-mail message from one of Kate’s choristers provided another set of data.

I restored the participants’ stories of experience to create a narrative of each participant’s life story. This process involved creating chronological accounts of the participants’ lives from childhood to present. The narratives are composed primarily of direct quotations from the participants with a minimal amount of connective commentary to assist in the flow of the narrative. I shared each narrative with the respective participant, which gave me the opportunity to receive feedback and check for accuracy. This was an important part of maintaining a relationship of trust with the participants and ensuring that their voices were being represented fairly. The purpose of the narrative accounts was two-fold. First, the narratives introduce the participants to the reader and help contextualize the analytical and interpretive discussions that follow. Second, they provided me with yet another way of exploring the data. In some cases, narrativeunities and discontinuities that I may not have recognized in the transcripts were more evident once I had restored the stories in chronological order.

The analysis process did not consist of a discrete set of steps; nor was it carried out as a discrete process. Rather, analysis was ongoing throughout the research and writing process.

The move from field texts to research texts is layered in complexity . . . There is no smooth transition, no one gathering of the field texts, sorting them through, and analyzing them. We return to them again and again, bringing our own
restoried lives as inquirers, bringing new research puzzles, and re-searching the texts. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 132)

As I transcribed the interviews, I made notes in the margins about things that seemed important or that were in need of follow-up. As I restoried the narratives, I continued to make note of emergent themes. Throughout the writing of the thesis as a whole, I engaged in a back and forth of writing drafts of chapters one through three and analyzing the data with new perspectives and understandings of both the participants’ stories and the purpose and goals of the thesis as a whole. Another significant aspect of the ongoing analysis was the sharing of my work with “response communities” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 132). As previously mentioned, I shared the narratives with the participants themselves. Further, I shared partial chapter drafts with colleagues and full drafts with my thesis committee members at various points in the writing process. This provided me with invaluable insights as I made sense of the data. My committee members were particularly helpful in identifying aspects of “taken for grantedness” that I was bringing to the analysis, which helped me further clarify my subjectivities, and re-search the data with greater depth.

Data analysis involved identifying narrative codes that appeared in the field texts. Essentially, I looked for the “patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 132) in each of the participants’ stories of experiences that would enable me to answer my first research question: “What constitutes the professional knowledge of three choral music educators, as revealed in the stories they choose to tell of their lives?” As I read and reread the interview transcripts, I highlighted stories that revealed something about what the participant knew about teaching. Next, I printed each of the highlighted excerpts on individual index cards. I labelled each index card with a
theme that represented the main idea of the story (e.g., “respect,” “learning from others,” “Newfoundland pride”). Once each index card was labelled, I clustered the cards with similar themes and determined an overarching theme for each cluster. These overarching themes determined the categories of professional knowledge for each participant (e.g. knowledge of self, knowledge of teaching role, knowledge of the choral milieu).

I analysed the research texts of the life stories (Part I of each of the participant chapters) to address the second research question: What life experiences, as revealed through their stories, have informed their professional knowledge? I then returned to the original transcripts as a way of checking to see if I had missed anything significant in the restorying process. The more I read the transcripts, listened to the interviews, and read the research texts I had composed of their life stories, the more I gained an intimate knowledge of their experiences and was able to interpret their professional knowledge.

It was not difficult to find answers to the third research question: How have the experiences of developing as educators within the specific social, cultural, and political contexts of Newfoundland and Labrador shaped their professional knowledge? The participants, though not responding directly to this question, addressed this aspect of their experiences explicitly through their stories.

I followed this process for each of the participants separately, and while the categories of professional knowledge that emerged for each participant were similar, they were not identical. Through the writing process, I continued to revisit and reconsider the main categories as well as the sub-categories of professional knowledge and found that I could occasionally shift them from one place to another to provide more clarity in my presentation of the data and my findings.
While the analysis and interpretations of each participant’s stories are not generalizable in a global sense, there are numerous common narrative threads across their experiences—as well as my own—which led me to believe they were worthy of discussion. I chose to do this using the concept of resonance (Conle, 1996, 2000) as a framework. In chapter seven, I discuss points of resonance across all three participants’ stories, with a focus on how they resonate with my personal experiences. I decided to use my experiences as a focal point as a way of acknowledging my subjectivities, and also as a way of representing my professional growth as a music educator throughout the research inquiry. Finally, a holistic examination of the data analysis and interpretation led to both lingering questions and newly emerging questions, which I have framed as the implications of this research, presented in chapter eight.
Chapter Four

This chapter explores the life stories and professional knowledge of Kate. The prelude explains my relationship to Kate prior to beginning this research and describes the settings in which I interviewed and observed her for this study. Part I presents a chronicle of Kate’s life story. While all words attributed to Kate are her own, I have reconstructed many of her stories from multiple interview transcripts. Part II responds directly to the research questions guiding this study. It presents Kate’s professional knowledge, organized thematically, as revealed to me through her own telling of her life story. Throughout this chapter, the words of Kate appear in italics.

Prelude

My Relationship to Kate

I often tell mutual acquaintances that Kate was my very first music teacher. With Kate being only five years older than I, it can be difficult to explain how this could possibly be so. But growing up, Kate lived next door to my grandparents. I spent a great deal of time at my nan’s house when I was a young girl, and on occasion, Kate, “the girl next door,” would come over to Nan’s yard and bring her guitar. Those occasions were magical times for me. Kate had a beautiful voice, and I was fascinated not only with her ability to play the guitar, but by her ability to sing and play at the same time! Being the oldest of three children, I enjoyed the opportunity to be the “little girl” every once and a while. If I could have had a big sister, Kate would have been it. While I didn’t see her often, when she came around, it was a special time. Kate sang songs and played guitar for me, not merely to entertain me, but to share those songs she loved and to teach me to sing them with her. Thirty years later, the only times I have ever attempted to strum a guitar
were on those days on my nan’s back porch, with Kate. Fortunately, I kept singing, and twenty years later, I had the good fortune to sing in one of Kate’s choirs. It was like everything had come full circle.

As Kate got older, the visits to Nan’s back porch ceased, but my fascination with her did not. I would watch from Nan’s living room window as Kate left her house with her cello. I was in awe. I didn’t really know what was involved with playing the cello— with any instrument, in fact—but I knew it was something special. As years went on, I too became a musician, and Kate became a music teacher. I continued to look out through the front window, and I would see Kate’s students come and go with their instruments. By this time, Kate no longer knew me and likely had no idea I continued a relationship with her through the window. It was near the end of my senior year in high school that Kate and I became reacquainted. She was conducting research for a paper for one of her undergraduate music education courses, and I had been recommended as an interview participant for her project. When I told her that I was Fran Sturge’s granddaughter, she could hardly believe it. Ever since that time, we have remained connected, on more of a professional basis than a personal one, but connected nonetheless. Kate continues to be an inspiration to me—and to many of my colleagues as well.

Like many Newfoundlanders, Kate moved to Toronto for work, where she established herself as a music educator. However, by the time I moved to Toronto for graduate school, Kate had already moved back to St. John’s. During the years I have spent in Toronto, I have met countless people who knew of and worked with Kate here. I’ve been asked many times if I know Kate—the love and respect people have for her is enormous. When I began to design my thesis research, I knew I wanted Kate to be a part
of it. It was during a Bach Festival in Toronto that I had the opportunity to chat with Kate about my thesis ideas. Immediately, she told me she loved where it sounded like I would be going with my research. I was giddy with excitement, as I had high hopes that she would agree to participate. Even with that aside, knowing that Kate believed in my project gave me a tremendous confidence boost, and it also prompted me to revisit the role she has played in the development of my own professional knowledge.

Setting the Research Stage

Kate and I met for interviews four times over a period of eight months. The first two interviews took place in Kate’s living room, curled up like a couple of cats on separate couches; the third took place in Kate’s kitchen, each of us with our hands wrapped around a hot cup of coffee; and the final took place on a weekday morning over breakfast in a quiet downtown restaurant that specializes in Newfoundland cuisine. In each case, the atmosphere was comfortable and relaxed, conducive to uninterrupted conversations.

Throughout the research process, I had the opportunity to observe Kate work with each of her six choirs. The rehearsals took place in a variety of churches, a school gymnasium, and the choral room at Memorial University. While the ages of the choristers ranged from approximately seven to seventy, the atmosphere in every rehearsal space was almost identical. There was a contagious enthusiasm for singing in each space, and love for Kate radiated from the singers, as they lined up, taking turns to make sure I knew how amazing Kate was.
Part I: Kate’s Story

Early Family Life

Kate was born the youngest of four children, a “pleasant surprise,” as she was the youngest child by 10 years. Her three elder siblings, a brother and two sisters, were just a year apart from each other. Despite the substantial age gap, Kate grew up in the midst of everybody and never felt left out, sometimes feeling as if she had three mothers and two fathers. While her mother and brother have passed away, Kate remains close to her father and to her sisters. Her family instilled a love of music in Kate, as it played a central role in their family life. Kate describes some of her earliest childhood memories:

My earliest memory is of being in a playpen. I remember standing up—Mom had it pushed against the stereo, and I remember standing up and holding onto the stereo, and then I remember her putting records on—“Mountains of Mourne”—that’s the first song I remember. And Joan Morrissey—I had not heard Joan Morrissey in about probably 15 or 20 years when I came back to Newfoundland. And it was probably five or six summers ago when I heard a Joan Morrissey CD and immediately broke out into tears. It was so powerful. My whole body just stopped, and then I started to remember—Joan Morrissey was on in the house all the time, and Mom didn’t have a note in her head, but Dad sang all the time. Dad is a beautiful Irish tenor, and so from a very young age, Dad and I would sing all the time.

My [oldest] sister, she had a guitar—she tells this story—I don’t actually believe this story—but I know it was some form of this story: She got a guitar when she was older, and I was six or seven. She wouldn’t let me play the guitar because she was afraid I would break it, so I would go [into her room], and she had it up on top of the [wardrobe]. I would shake it until the neck came down. When the neck came in sight, I’d get up on the bed and take it down and start playing around with it. She said that in a couple of weeks I learned guitar better
than she did. I don’t believe that at all, but I think in time, I just kind of saw her doing it and figured it out.

It was at home where Kate’s sense of identity and pride as a Newfoundlander was nurtured as well.

My grandfather was a fisherman, and his father was a sealer, and to hear all those stories. I still remember hearing my grandfather every now and then, or my dad, not so much my dad, but every now and then, I just have these memories of my grandfather saying things like, “Well, we didn’t get that because we’re from Newfoundland,” and you know that attitude, which actually really does bother me. It really bothers me, but I think that was quite prevalent years and years ago. And not that I heard it a whole lot, but obviously it stuck with me if I remember it, for sure.

I remember singing folksongs and being proud of them when I was a kid. The fact that my dad was singing “Danny Boy,” or he’d make me sing Newfoundland tunes, and my mother was listening to “Mountains of Mourne.” It was absolutely planting seeds, but not consciously. But those seeds were absolutely being planted, and having a guitar and going over to your [nan’s]—to the neighbours’ and singing and things like that. It’s incredible once you start to have a foundation of knowledge about something; you feel like you own it, and that’s where a lot of the feeling of Newfoundland came for me. It comes from the music. I have a lot of pride in this province and the island and where I’m from, and it comes from the music.

At age 12, Kate’s love of music—and especially of singing—led her to beg her mother to let her join the folk choir at her church. Kate’s mother had given up going to church years earlier, but she allowed Kate to join the choir, as long as she went on her own. So Kate walked by herself to and from church every Sunday morning. It was through the church that Kate came to value the power of community. Kate went on to conduct a number of church choirs, and she continues in that role today.
As a teenager, Kate took lessons in piano and voice, always fully supported by her family. As an adult, Kate came to truly appreciate the sacrifices her parents had made to pay for her lessons. While she did not grow up in a financially privileged family, Kate grew up with the privilege of being surrounded by parents who valued music.

**K-12 Schooling**

Kate went to school in the former Roman Catholic School Board for St. John’s, where music education was a priority. Kate had the fortune to grow up in a school system that had mandatory music specialists in primary and elementary grades, a standard that continues in Newfoundland school boards today. Kate’s school music education reinforced the value placed on music at home.

*Right from kindergarten, we went out for music. In grade one, we went to music, and we all sang—everybody sang at that time, and that’s what music was—it was singing. And I sang in the choirs, so that was a large part of it too. I still remember, [sings excerpt from “Don Gato,” from Making Music Your Own]. I haven’t heard that song—I still haven’t heard that song since I sang it in grade four, but I still remember it; it was our favourite one. We’d run into class and sit down and open up the books, and say, “Oh Sister, can we do this one, please?” So, school music was a huge part . . . And the nun heard—we’d all have to sing by ourselves, and she knew that I could sing, so I think when I was 10, Sister Brenda had me sing something for—for a show at school or some kind of assembly, and she realized that she thought I had a really nice voice, and then she put me in the Kiwanis festival, and she played for me, and then in Kiwanis festival I think I sang well and did well. And she said to my parents, “You should really put her in singing lessons,” and then I started at the age of 12 doing some singing lessons.*

Kate’s musical life grew when she started to play the cello through her school’s string program, for no other reason than being told she would play the cello.
Sister Brenda came in and said, “Kate, you’ve got a good ear; you’re going to play cello. And I said, “Yes I will, Sister” because you didn’t say no to the nuns. I loved her dearly, but her holy stick would rap your fingers if you were playing out of tune, and she would squish your fingers together. It was a pretty tough go of it, but it was also the reason why I’m doing what I’m doing, and I never ever want to take anything away from that.

While Kate has pursued and established a career as a choral conductor and educator, it was when she started the cello that her dream of becoming a music teacher began:

*When I was in grade six, I knew I wanted to be a music teacher right away. I knew right from the time I picked up the cello that I wanted to be a music teacher. And it’s funny because even from that time I knew I wanted to be a choral conductor. I knew it wasn’t instrumental, but I couldn’t put it in words.*

With a strong string teacher, Kate had positive experiences playing the cello throughout junior high, but it was singing that brought her tremendous joy.

*Even up until grade eight or grade nine, I don’t ever remember it being uncool to sing. I remember being happy sitting in the desks and singing—that’s for sure. There were never any—there was never any apprehension about that—there were never any bad feelings about that. I remember those books. I can still see the orange books with the colours and the waves on them. I also loved to sing in the choir, and I loved that feeling of being in amongst a group of people, and it all happening around you. LOVED it!*

Kate’s musical beginnings were well-nurtured by a family and a school system that placed a high value on music. Kate also had the good fortune to continue her education in a high school that was “the flagship of musical performance in the city, in the province.”
What I learned, the people I met, going touring, the orchestra . . . Orchestra was so important to me. I remember being in the chamber choir and the girls’ choir, and loving that. I happened to be in with a particularly incredible group of singers. I think if I look back at our picture now of the girls’ choir that went to Ottawa, I think two-thirds of them are musicians—professional musicians. It’s incredible.

Undergraduate Education

The experience of choral singing was always an experience that grounded Kate. And while she had positive experiences in her school orchestra, she never felt particularly confident as a cellist. However, when it came time to audition for music school, Kate knew she would pursue a major in cello.

I think it probably would have been in grade 11 or grade 12, my voice teacher did say, “Are we going to do an audition? Are you going to get ready for an audition?” because I did it all—I did concert groups and all that stuff. I was never a great singer, but I was a natural singer, and had a lovely voice and sang in tune, and learned things really quickly. But it didn’t even occur to me that I should do voice because I could [get by with my] voice, and I knew I didn’t have to work at that. I knew my living, my musical life, was never going to centre around me being on stage. I knew that it was going to be about people and teaching and—and I just—it’s like something took over and said, “Yeah, you have to do cello. You have to learn how to work hard to do this.” I knew that this [choral conducting] was going to be my life because I couldn’t picture anything differently. I’m saying I knew, but I didn’t really “know,” but it’s almost like [I knew] instinctively that if I didn’t get some really serious training on an instrument . . . If I was going to get any kind of musical chops, I had to do cello. I don’t know what it was about. I know it’s not easy to do voice, and not easy to go on as a voice major and do incredible things, but somehow I knew, and again, I say the word “know,” but it wasn’t a conscious thing, but it was necessary for me to take cello.
Of her experiences as an undergraduate, Kate says, “I have such great memories, but such terrible, terrible memories as well.” Kate’s great memories are primarily of the social experience of being an undergraduate.

When I think about it, I think mostly about my first kind of reaction, what headspace it puts me in, and [thinking about my undergraduate years] puts me in a really, really beautiful headspace. It’s incredible—mostly because socially, that’s where I met Jim, and he is the LOVE of my life, so that was incredible. And the friends I had were really wonderful; we had a lot of fun. I loved most of my professors. There are pictures going through my head right now, and they all have to do with—they all have to do with the people that I met, and . . . good things.

Kate’s difficult memories are rooted in her experiences as a cellist:

I never, especially with cello, felt like I should be there (at Music School) or that I was good enough. I hated, hated going to my lessons, and the juries, and the playing, and the orchestras, and all that stuff. I was really one of those students who did not do very well. All of the practical stuff was just—it was awful—in university.

It was studies in music education that resonated the most with Kate:

When I started to do education [in third year], I started to realize that was really my strong point. I always knew I was really musical and had always been told I was really musical and could feel that I was really musical, but it was the way in which I interacted with people and kids—that made me feel like that was the core of who I am.

The fifth and final year of Kate’s music education program included a semester-long internship, which she completed at her old high school with her former choral music teacher.

I remember wanting to go [there] because I knew I wanted to be a choral conductor, and I knew I wanted to learn a lot about—I loved high school choir,
and I thought the choir was really fabulous, and I wanted to learn more about it, and that was obviously a place to go. I also knew that I would have a lot of responsibility there. I remember walking in and within the first couple of weeks, [my supervising teacher] saying, “Okay this grade nine class is yours—you do it.” And at the time that felt really great. She [also] let me do a girls’ choir all on my own. When the internship was finished, I stayed on and did that, and that was really powerful for me. I remember loving getting up in the morning and going to my internship.

Outside of the university context, during these years, Kate was a Suzuki strings teacher and had begun conducting the Suzuki orchestras in St. John’s. She also took a job as choral director at a local church, where she further developed her choral conducting skills leading a well-established SATB choir.

**Early Career**

Kate graduated with a Bachelor of Music and a Bachelor of Music Education and taught at her former elementary school for two or three years. Eventually, like many young Newfoundlanders, Kate and her husband, a professional musician, moved to Toronto to find work, where they moved in with Kate’s sister. While it was a necessary move, Kate says that it was “really hard for [us] to leave home.” Kate established a private studio and through connections she had made at the Suzuki camp in St. John’s, she quickly found work teaching at a Suzuki school near Toronto, where she also began an orchestra program. During her second year in Toronto, Kate became a supply teacher for a local school board, which, in the days pre-dating such internet resources as MapQuest and GoogleMaps, was an adventure in and of itself.

*I will never forget living downtown and getting a call from an automated machine at 6:30 in the morning, and the whole house would get up because nobody knew*
where to go because it was out in Etobicoke, and Jim would be sitting with [one] map, and [my sister] would be sitting with the other map to figure out where the school was that I had to get to. I had to take the streetcar up to the subway to the very last subway. I was living near the Danforth, and I had to get the subway out to Kipling, and then get another bus, and then walk. [One time], I was so overwhelmed by it all, and I was late because it would take me almost two hours to get to this school. I got off the bus, and I didn’t know where I was going, so I asked a woman, “Can you tell me where this school is?” And she said, “Okay, go two blocks north.” And I just burst into tears, “I don’t know north from south, from east from west. Just tell me left or right.” You know what it’s like when you’re from [Newfoundland]. I [didn’t understand] the grid at all. I was so overwhelmed, and she just looked at me like I was cracked. It was hilarious.

Supply teaching eventually led to a temporary replacement position, which led to a permanent position at Westbridge Public, an urban school that was in danger of losing its music program. This position was a transformational experience for Kate.

I still remember [the music coordinator] telling me that they had a number of jobs, and they could have given me any of those certain jobs, and I guess it was my own fault for being such a tyrant as a supply teacher. She said, “There’s a school where the principal wants to get rid of the music program, and we’re going to send you in there to try and do something.” I learned more from that school and that situation and those teachers and those kids than I will ever learn ever again. It is that pocket of time, those four or five years in my life—even when I was in the middle of it, I knew it was something special . . . That was the best five years of teaching of my life—there’s no question—and I don’t think it could ever be replicated.

Eventually, Kate was offered “the job of [her] dreams,” and she moved to another school. It was a high profile job at Grant Collegiate, a high school with a strong choral program, “the job that [she] had waited [her] whole life for.” Kate embraced the new position, as she had a “burning desire to find out [if she was] a good musician.” She
saw it as an opportunity to see if she could be “a good teacher and a good musician at the same time.”

As in all other contexts of Kate’s life, the people she met in Toronto formed an integral part of her experiences there.

*I can name five or six people, that from looking at them, spending time with them, from them being so generous—I remember when I was doing a couple of master’s courses at U of T, and a colleague, he gave me all of his stuff that he did in his master’s—everything—put it in a box, dug it out, and then he would sit with me and talk with me, and would take so much time. People were so kind and so sharing, and so giving. And the friends—we started a band. We started a Celtic band. Jim and I played, and a teacher that we did plays with—he played the tin whistle. Every time I go to Toronto, it’s those teachers that I still see—two or three of them. And just the fun we had—the kids saw us having so much fun for birthdays. One birthday, I’ll never forget—I opened up the door and there was this big box outside my door, and [one of the teachers] had put—taped one of her kids in the box—the kid jumped out of the box—it was just—these kids knew that we adored each other and had so much fun.

With a blossoming career as a choral educator and conductor and an incredible network of friends and colleagues, life in Toronto seemed as if it could not have been any better. Kate says, “By the time five-six years rolled around, I was madly in love with Toronto, madly in love with the people I was living my life with, and had just gotten the job that I had waited my whole life for.” Everything would change when Kate’s husband was offered a tenure-track teaching job at Memorial University of Newfoundland, in St. John’s.
Returning to St. John’s

Kate and Jim lived apart for one year when he moved back to St. John’s for a one-year contract at Memorial University. Having just landed a brand new job herself, Kate stayed in Toronto and moved ahead with her position at Grant Collegiate. When her husband’s job opened up as a tenure-track position, he applied, went through the interview process, and was offered the job on a permanent basis. Kate was not thrilled about leaving her dream job after only one year, but she said, “Obviously, it’s family, so you have to do what is right. To be really honest, there was not even a second thought.”

Instead of looking for a job in St. John’s, Kate took advantage of the fact that Memorial was starting a graduate program in music, and choral conducting was one of the streams being offered. While moving back to St. John’s had been difficult for Kate, taking the master’s program at Memorial was a wise decision. “It was the best thing that ever happened to me; I met all my very good friends in that program and learned so much. It was heaven, really.”

During the second year of the master’s program, Kate began to consider her professional future in St. John’s. It was time for a change.

In my second year of the master’s program, I knew that conducting was what I wanted to do [as a career], and Jim was really supportive. He said, “You need to take this time to do what you really want to do. We’re in a situation where we don’t need a lot of money right now.” That enabled me to kind of say, “Okay, what’s the pie in the sky?” And I said, “A choir.” And it’s always been women’s voices that have been my real love—I love SATB singing, but there’s something about a community of women that rings a special note for me.

From there, Kate contacted a group of women she knew could form a substantial core for any choir, and when they came on board, the women’s choir was born. Soon
afterwards, Kate started a private studio and went back to conducting the Suzuki orchestras, as she had done years earlier. She was also asked to conduct a new boys’ choir as part of a local youth choir program as well as a choir at St. Aidan’s, a private Catholic school. These new experiences proved to be rewarding for Kate, far beyond providing her with platforms to develop as a choral conductor.

*With the school kids and with the orchestra kids, I've learned a lot about knowing me as a person and knowing my strengths and building on that within the musical community. It's really powerful because I teach differently, conduct differently, and work differently because of that.*

With a master’s degree in hand, professional opportunities continued to come Kate’s way. She started teaching as a sessional instructor at Memorial University, and with a friend and colleague from her graduate program, Kate became a co-director for an amateur men’s choir. Kate was also reunited with the organist she had worked with in her church job during her undergraduate years, this time at a new church, where Kate took a position as choral director. While she was reluctant to take on another commitment when she was offered the church position, Kate does not regret accepting the offer: “*I feel like a part of my life is back, to be with the church community again.*”

With so many opportunities available to Kate, achieving personal and professional balance is difficult. After a number of years back in St. John’s, Kate decided to give up performing as a cellist and conducting the Suzuki orchestras.

*When I moved down here and gave up teaching in the school system, to piece together a freelance life that, number one, enables you to pay the bills, and number two, enables you to work towards a career in [choral] conducting, which is what I ultimately want to do—it’s really hard. So, I’m doing way too much, but more of what I need to be doing and want to be doing than when I first started. Last year, I gave up my orchestras, which is the hardest thing I’ve ever, ever, ever*
had to do, and gave up performing cello. It’s a relief, but it’s so hard; I can’t even listen to music right now.

To an outsider, it would appear that Kate has firmly planted herself in St. John’s and embraced every opportunity that has come her way, but she still finds herself at somewhat of a crossroads.

I’m still questioning because I’m still doing this and that, and I don’t have a full-time job, but I don’t really know what I’m looking for. So I’m still kind of in transition, to be honest with you. But I cannot picture being anywhere else now. I think life can’t be any better than this, but I’m still very—I don’t really know what I’m doing or where I’m going, and even sometimes I think, “What do I want to do?”

What Kate does know is what is important to her: “Choirs, community, and social justice are big things for me, and it’s something that’s always on my mind.” Kate has plans in mind for her choirs, plans that will tie her three areas of interest together. But on a personal-professional level, what the future holds in store for Kate as an individual remains to be seen.

**Part II: Kate’s Professional Knowledge**

My first research question asks what constitutes the professional knowledge of each of the choral music educators in this study. In this section, I describe what I consider to be the main components of Kate’s professional knowledge, which were revealed through my analysis of the transcripts of our interviews and my observation notes of Kate’s rehearsals. I have identified four main facets of Kate’s professional knowledge: her knowledge of self, her knowledge of her teaching role, her knowledge of music, and a commitment to a set of values that guides her practice.
My second research question asks how the professional knowledge of the choral music educators in this study has been shaped by their life experiences. Through this section, I describe how Kate’s professional knowledge is manifested in her practice, as well as significant interactions with people and events that have informed each of the four facets of professional knowledge.

My third research question asks how the participants’ experiences of developing as choral music educators within the specific social, cultural, and political contexts of Newfoundland and Labrador have shaped their professional knowledge. This question will be addressed in the “Knowledge of Musical Experience” section of this chapter and will be discussed further in chapter seven.

**Knowledge of Self**

Kate has a clear understanding of who she is as a teacher and a learner, and this enables her to approach her teaching practice with confidence. Her self-knowledge can be seen through her ability to recognize her personal strengths as a choral music educator, her enthusiasm in learning from the strengths of others, her willingness to learn through challenging situations, her ongoing commitment to reflexivity as she endeavours to improve her practice, and her sense of identity as a Newfoundlander.

**Recognizing personal strengths.** While Kate did not always have a great deal of confidence in herself as a student, as a choral music educator, she has learned to recognize the strengths she brings to the ensembles she conducts. Through this aspect of her self-knowledge, Kate recognizes the importance of nurturing confidence in her students/singers and helping them believe in whatever it is that they wish to accomplish.
When Kate began to take courses in music education in the third year of her undergraduate program, she knew for certain where her place in the music profession would be. While she had always been comfortable as a musician, when she started to focus on teaching music in group settings, she knew that a career in music education was what lay ahead for her. While Kate had an intuitive sense that she belonged in music education, and others would echo that sentiment, it took time for her confidence as a music educator to develop.

I remember a lot of great positive feedback [about my internship]. It’s so funny—I never thought I was a good teacher. Like, I never thought, “Oh, I’m a good teacher.” I don’t know if any of us ever do. I always got a lot of good feedback about it, but I always, even at a young age, I always kind of felt like a little bit of a fake. I don’t know why. I remember loving getting up in the morning and going to my internship. That was when I really started to feel like, “Okay, maybe I’m not a complete disaster,” and it’s probably when I realized that, “Okay, I’m all right, and I’ll be okay.” [But] I will say to this day, and I will say—will say to anybody—it wasn’t until I left this island that I really knew that I was good—not just okay—but I was a “good” teacher.

Kate is comfortable with her musicianship, but she does not regard it as one of her primary strengths. Instead, she attributes much of her success as a choral educator/conductor to her leadership skills, which include holding her students and choristers in high esteem, her willingness to make difficult decisions, and her ability to bring people together as a community. Kate shared her thoughts on her strengths as a choral conductor:

I know my strengths and my weaknesses really well, and I do know that leadership is my strength. And I think they sense that too, and they know that. And I think that’s why a lot of them are there—because they’re not wanting to be with somebody who is “the conductor.” People need to know they have a leader,
and I know that I do have those qualities and can make the hard decisions—like I’ve had to ask people to leave the group—I’ve had—with the high school choir—I’ve had to make decisions about auditions, and it kills me that a kid who wants to sing can’t sing, and I’ve had to grapple with that. But, if we’re going to build a program where I get to a point where I can have a full choir and an auditioned choir, these hard decisions have to be made.

Like many music teachers, especially beginning music teachers, when she first began teaching in Toronto, Kate found herself with a homeroom and teaching math and language arts, in addition to her music responsibilities. This experience helped her gain confidence as a teacher in general and to believe that her role as a music teacher was just as important as her role as a language arts teacher. Music holds a precarious position in many schools, and the value of music education is not recognized by all teachers and administrators. This can contribute to the sense music teachers often have that their specialty subject is regarded as an educational frill (Bresler, 1998; McCarthy, 1999).

I was as comfortable calling [parents] about a child in [a] music class as I was in [a] language arts class because of that experience of teaching homeroom. That was really powerful for me, and I tell the students that all the time—now in the undergraduate course—I say that “Throughout the year, you have to believe that what you’re doing [as a music teacher] is every bit as valuable as teaching math, and until you believe that, you’re not going to feel comfortable, and you’re not going to be able to fly that flag.” And so, that was—that was hugely important.

Kate encourages the music education students she teaches to enter their classrooms with grounded beliefs in the value of what they teach, making it easier to maintain and build self-confidence. For beginning teachers, especially, self-confidence contributes to resiliency, a contributing factor to surviving the initial years of the profession (Blair, 2008; Price, Mansfield, & McConney, 2012).
I think you’ve got to know what you’re doing it for, and I think you’ve got to be really honest with yourself. And I also think it’s okay if you’re doing it for different reasons. I mean we need people out there who are exceptional musicians that are going to do what they need to do to have exceptional performing ensembles. It needs to happen—because people need flagships to look at. But don’t coat that for yourself if that’s what you’re after. I think that’s the most important thing is that you know why you’re doing something. And then you can move forward with a confidence about it.

Kate’s confidence and strengths as a leader were evident in each of her rehearsals, as I observed her establish a positive learning climate alongside high expectations for her choristers. Kate expects her choristers to be prepared for rehearsal, and she does not hesitate to let singers know when she feels their lack of preparation is interfering with the productivity of a rehearsal. During a men’s choir rehearsal leading up to a performance, Kate said, “Don’t just make it up. If you don’t have music in front of you, and you don’t know it, don’t sing!” Kate takes ownership of errors when they are hers, and she expects no less of her choristers, particularly when dealing with the adult ensembles. Through all her rehearsals, even when pushing the choirs to work hard, there is a pervasive atmosphere of trust and respect, and she ends each rehearsal thanking her choristers for their work.

Learning from the strengths of others. Kate not only recognizes the personal strengths she brings to her choral contexts, but she draws from the strengths of others. She is very much aware of the “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975/2002) in which she has participated—and continues to participate—and how it informs who she is and what she values as a choral music educator. Perhaps above all else, Kate strives to establish a sense of community within her choral groups and also endeavours to
contribute to the larger community through her work with choirs. Kate believes the importance of community, as well as a sense of perspective, came to her through her father.

Wenn I think about community, I think about giving, and I think a lot of that comes from Dad, from my father. Dad also is probably the most rawly open person I have ever met, and it’s—I call it his “spidy senses”—his intuition towards people and to being so kind and so open and carefree and loving—it’s unbelievable, and I don’t know where that came from. I’ve never seen anything like it. I’ve seen very few people in my life like it, even to this day. It doesn’t matter how poorly someone has treated Dad: He always says, “Oh it must be because of this—it must be”—and it does not matter. I just don’t understand it—there’s not one bit of resentment or envy or sadness in him at all, and I think that’s a large part of it. I think—I don’t think I’m exactly like that, but I think I have a lot of that in me.

Throughout Kate’s career, she has always been open to learning from her colleagues. The school environment can often be one of isolation for a music teacher (Ballantyne, 2007; Palmer, 2011; Sindberg, 2011), but Kate has never let herself become isolated from her colleagues. She has also been fortunate to have worked with other teachers who are open to sharing with and supporting each other. While organized groups, such as professional learning communities (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008), strive to achieve such opportunities for professional growth on a formal level, Kate’s willingness and desire to learn from others enabled her to achieve such professional growth on her own. Of her experiences teaching at Westbridge Public, Kate recalls learning from her colleagues:

I learned the importance of adoring and respecting the people that you work with—because I made some of the best friends of my life in those couple of years and learned so much from seeing them. There are four or five teachers that I have
met in the last couple of years that I would say, are probably almost 100% the reason I was successful. Seeing them interact with kids and seeing them take a real interest in every single child and never overlooking a kid that needed something—I just learned so much from those people.

Exemplary teachers are open to learning from their students, but it is not always easy for teachers to admit that they do not have all the answers or that their students may know more than they do in one area or another. Kate found it difficult to admit that when she first started teaching at Grant Collegiate, she looked to some of her students for answers and affirmation. Kate was not fully confident in her musicianship, and she knew she was teaching a group of students that included a number of phenomenal musicians. Kate may not have shared with her students that she was looking to them for guidance, but she wanted to do all she could do to be the best choral music teacher she could be. In turn, she wanted her students to be able to achieve at their highest possible level. Drawing upon the musical strengths of the students at Grant Collegiate actually helped fuel Kate’s growing confidence as a musician-teacher.

That’s what my fear was—that I [wasn’t] a good enough musician to do this, and thank god for those kids that year because I know I wasn’t good enough to bring them to where they needed to be. I cannot tell you how much I learned, and they didn’t even know this, and I can’t even believe I’m saying this out loud—I’ve never said it out loud—but how many times I’d be in a rehearsal, and I’d be looking for the reaction of a couple of those kids, knowing, learning from them, grasping for everything I could because I wanted so much to do well, to learn, to make sure that these kids were going to, you know, do as well as they could do.

While living in Toronto, Kate sang with a pre-eminent semi-professional choir, conducted by Lydia Adams. Kate spoke of the incredible learning opportunity that was in terms of the repertoire she sang and the guest musicians she worked with, but perhaps
most important to her personal development as a choral educator was seeing the way in which Adams interacted with her choristers.

Seeing Lydia Adams hug everyone after the concert and be so gentle and kind and sweet—and to be able to bring a grown man to tears for not practicing without saying anything but “I’m disappointed.” I still—I’ve written her two or three times since and said, “I don’t think you have any idea how powerful—just the way you are with people—it was for me.” I always aspire to, to be that way—to really appreciate people—because that’s where, that’s where I first saw it at that level of music-making—at that, where she’s, she’s working with a choir at such a high level, and being who she is—very powerful for me to see. Yeah, that was pretty huge for me.

In each rehearsal I attended, regardless of the particular choral ensemble, the overall atmosphere was strikingly similar. Kate consistently made direct eye contact with individual singers, gave warm, encouraging smiles and addressed her choristers—the children and the adults—as “ladies and gentlemen.” Informed by the personal strengths of her father and Adams—specifically how they relate to other people—the ethic of care (Noddings, 1984/2003) that pervades Kate’s rehearsal spaces was ever-present and at the core of the relationships she has with each of her choristers.

Learning through challenges. As a lifelong learner, Kate has come to make the most of challenges that come her way, believing that something good will come of any difficult situation. Finding success through challenging circumstances has allowed Kate to keep the bar of expectations high for herself and to create challenging, yet stimulating, environments through which her choristers learn and grow.

Shortly after landing the job of her dreams at Grant Collegiate, Kate’s husband landed a university teaching position “back home” in St. John’s. Kate found it difficult to
move back to St. John’s, but the timing worked in her favour, in terms of her ongoing professional development. Memorial University had just established a master’s program in conducting, and Kate would go on to be a member of the first graduating class.

_I was so glad I had started the master’s program instead of coming down and looking for a job. I decided just to focus on me. I was so lucky. I did the audition, I got in, and I said, “Okay, this is really wonderful”—it was kind of the next step of what I needed to do—to be fully entrenched in working with choirs, and learning about [so much], doing research, and reading about music. I got to do interviews and research papers, and all that. It was two years to do that—it was heaven, really._

During the master’s program, Kate took courses in both orchestral and choral conducting. To this day, Kate draws on the practical knowledge she gained through her work with her orchestral conducting teacher, but at the time, there were moments that Kate thought she would never survive.

_[He] pushed me to the point where he had me in tears so often because of what I didn’t know, but I needed that. I can’t tell you how much I learned from him in those two years here, where I’d go in, and he, just no matter what you did right, there was always something wrong, and somewhere further to go._

_I’ll never forget the first time that I had a workshop with him. I was conducting in front of the string quartet—it was pretty good, and I learned a lot, like a huge amount, and then he did this talk on score preparation, which has informed my score preparation since. So I went into my second rehearsal, [thinking] I was really well-prepared, and then, twenty minutes in, he said, “Close your score.” I closed my score, and I thought, “Okay, I can do this.” And [pointing at the score] he said, “Oh, you didn’t hear this?” And then [having taken the score away], he said, “When do the second violins come in?” And I said, “Oh, I think it’s beat three.” “Is it beat three?” “I think.” “No. Not ‘I think.’ Is it beat three?” “Yes, it’s beat three.” So I got it, and I was all happy, [and then he said], “What [about the] bowing?” “Ahm, I—it’s an up—it’s a
down . . .” I was flustered, and the first violin section was paralysed. I remember one of the violinists coming up to me afterwards, saying, “Kate, I couldn’t breathe,” and then me talking to him afterwards, saying “I can’t handle that.” He said, “You’re obviously upset with me,” and I said “because I can’t handle it.” He said, “I’m preparing you because if you’re in a professional situation and you don’t know exactly—within the first ten seconds, they’re going to know whether they’re going to listen to you or not.” And I’m thinking, “But I’m never going to be in that [situation].” But just expecting that from yourself and having two years to work scores to that degree—I can’t even tell you—I can’t put it in words how much that taught me. I still call him now, when I’m preparing for something, and will ask him to sit and have a chat with me about it if it’s something big.

Kate had similar experiences in other conducting workshops outside of the university, and more than anything else, she has learned to take the opportunity to learn in any setting, no matter how difficult.

[Another] thing I learned—that bad experiences—you’ll learn from them—don’t be afraid of them. I did the Jon Washburn program, and he was really hard on us, and I thought I was going to die [on the podium], but I learned so much, so that’s another big thing that has informed me. You know—when things are tough, and when it’s bad, something good will come out of it. You’ll learn something, you’ll get through it, you’ll do something, and I really believe that—really believe it.

Kate’s experiences with her conducting teachers were not entirely dissimilar from her experiences with her piano teacher when she was a child. While her piano teacher was tough with Kate, looking back, she feels she needed that extra push because she had not yet developed a sense of discipline. However, at the time, the harsh approach of her piano teacher chipped away at her confidence. As an adult, Kate has learned to not take criticism personally, and having developed an appreciation for the importance of work ethic, she embraces the challenging learning situations as opportunities to become a
better conductor/musician/educator. Aside from the value of the practical knowledge Kate has gained through these experiences, I observed some of the other lessons she has learned from these experiences as they manifested in her professional practice. She establishes a positive learning climate, but she pushes towards musical excellence, no matter the choir’s level of achievement. In a youth choir rehearsal leading up to a performance, Kate drilled intonation, word endings, and musical expression. Kate told me afterwards that she had decided in advance of rehearsal that “no matter how good they were singing, I was going to push them.” Similarly, in a women’s choir rehearsal, after singing through a particularly challenging Finnish piece, Kate praised the choir for their “very good” work, but was clear that there was still “work to be done.”

**Reflexivity.** It is clear that Kate takes full responsibility for her ongoing professional development, whether it is informally learning from those around her or formally in a graduate program or professional development workshop. A further indication of her commitment to professional growth is her reflexive approach to understanding who she is as an educator and how she can improve her practice.

*The older I get, the more I realize it’s how I relate to people—it’s not just who you are, it’s how you are in the world, and that’s not necessarily—I wouldn’t say that one way of being or another way of being is necessarily good, bad, different. It’s just that who, how you are, and recognizing that, I think, is important.*

Some of the burning questions that fuel Kate’s ongoing development as a choral music educator entail how best to relate to her men’s choir and her women’s choir, as she finds the interactions in the single-sex groupings to be much different than those in a mixed choral setting. Her reflexive approach moves her closer to finding an answer to her questions.
[The men are] so different from the women. And it took me—it took me a year to kind of figure out—well, I still don’t have it figured out because I walk away from every rehearsal going, “Okay, Kate, what did you do wrong there?” Because you know when you walk away from rehearsal and you know everything kind of came together, and you reflect afterwards, and you’re like, “Okay this worked, this didn’t work, we have to do this next week, this next week . . .”

As Kate related her experiences in a wide variety of teaching contexts, she explained that each teaching context has informed another.

It’s amazing how every group of people—every age group—informs, and even with the young kids, I treat them so differently than I did when I first started teaching, and so university teaching has been really good for me that way.

Kate’s appreciation of the reflexive process is evident when she speaks about her experience participating in this thesis research. For her, it is not just about growing towards a deeper self-understanding, but about realizing that everyone you interact with, especially as an educator, has a complex life story as well.

I do spend a lot of time thinking, but just—I think especially in the earlier process—that first interview—to have to go back and reflect on my experiences growing up, and to make those connections with what I’m doing now, and how my entire life has kind of—and obviously it would—but my experiences as a young musician, as a kid in school, as a university student, as a young teacher, have completely informed how I teach today. That’s been a really big and powerful tool for me. Because it makes you sit back. I mean it makes you sit back and think about some of the decisions you’ve made recently and how you move forward with some things, and most important, it makes you look at all the individuals that you’re working with and saying, “Every single one of those people, their lives are built the same way mine is.” I think looking at the people that are in those ensembles that you’re working with is the most important thing you do as a—I can honestly say, this is one thing I probably would be arrogant enough to say—for any teacher, no matter if a child is four years old and you’re teaching Suzuki
violin or cello, or an 85-year old Christian brother, to realize that they all have very complex, complicated, incredible lives, and that every experience they have helps them form who they are, and you’re one of their experiences. And in many cases, you’re a really big experience for them, their music-making—huge. So that’s a large thing that this has done for me. It’s incredible, and so—this is so good for me to be talking about this stuff. It’s really amazing actually—holy cow—everybody should have to do this as a teacher. Everybody!

Kate’s thoughts about how she learns from her experiences and uses them to move forward speak for themselves. I have no doubt that the rehearsals I observed were all a result of careful preparation based on reflecting on prior rehearsals and mindful consideration of her role in creating a productive rehearsal.

Identity as a Newfoundlander. Kate’s experiences with music from Newfoundland have shaped a significant part of her identity as a Newfoundlander. As a choral conductor, her strong connection to music from her home province informs her decisions about repertoire selection and performance goals for her ensembles.

In high school, it became very popular to learn all those Irish tunes, and that’s when I started to realize how proud I was. And when I started to be able to sing the lyrics, we would all go to a party, and I could join in on the lyrics of a song—that was really powerful for me, and that started to build that whole identity of “this belongs to me,” “this belongs to us,” “this is a community of people that can do something together.” Huge pride. And then of course, right through university, that became a really important way that we connected as friends. That’s [when] I think I started kind of developing on my own an identity—and, I was lucky to have been teaching with people [who have] dedicated [their whole lives] to Newfoundland traditional music. It was then that I became aware that we have a whole, we have a whole canon of music that has been influenced by Irish music, but it was actually composed, written, created by Newfoundlanders. That became really interesting to me, and that’s resurging right now because my big
dream is to find repertoire, to find tunes that are not sung in the common repertoire (like “I se Da B’y” and “The Kelligrews Soiree”), to find tunes like “I Hang My Hat on a Willow Tree” and “Early Morning”—stuff that most people don’t know—and to have them arranged for choirs. That’s something that I will be doing in the next five years—there’s no question.

As a high school student, Kate traveled to Toronto and was confronted with the stereotype, not uncommon at the time, that Newfoundlanders were fishermen who lived in igloos. Years later, as an adult, Kate lived and worked in Toronto and discovered just how powerful the sense of being a Newfoundlander could be when she met other Newfoundlanders there. The story which follows illustrates Kate’s sense of awe upon realizing how powerful the connection between Newfoundlanders can be. Interestingly, it was someone from an outside perspective, an Ontarian, who helped her make that realization.

*When I went to Toronto, I remember distinctly the first time I was so proud of Newfoundlanders as a community. It was the first year or two I was there. Myself and my other teacher friends, we went out for drinks. And then there was another teacher who had come along, and she had gone to MUN [Memorial University of Newfoundland]. We’d never met each other before, but immediately, we had a connection, and that was just so real for me and so natural, and [one of the other teachers there] said, “I’m so jealous of you,” and I said, “What do you mean?” He said, “Do you have any idea how beautiful it is to see people from the same place get together and immediately converse as if they’re distant cousins, or they’re family, and there’s that immediate comfort?” There’s that immediate history, immediate trust, and I think that’s a big thing—there’s an immediate trust with somebody [when you know they’re] from Newfoundland, and he said that would never happen to me with somebody from [somewhere else].

The role that *sense of place* (Hudson, 2006) plays in the identities of many Newfoundlanders is one that transcends factors such as geography and age. As Kate
relates, it is difficult to describe what that sense of place does, but there is no doubt that it
does something.

If I’m over in—I don’t know—Mississauga—and I meet somebody and they say
they’re from Newfoundland, all of a sudden, it’s—it’s almost like a full body
experience. You know immediately that there’s a connection and a trust and an
understanding—I don’t even know an understanding of what, but there’s an
understanding of being—of how you are—I can’t even put it in words, and that’s
hugely powerful, and my god, the sense of pride because of that is unbelievable.
And I think that informs Newfoundlanders in so many ways, and on all different
levels—whatever age they are . . .

Kate has experienced this, not only in her personal life, but in her choirs as well.
She describes one such experience with her youth choir, as they were preparing for
Festival 500, an international choral festival that is held bi-annually in St. John’s.

The youth choir kids now—we’re coming up to Festival 500—this is so incredible:
I had rehearsal with them the other night, and we’re singing this Latin American
tune, and we’re doing Mozart “Cat Duet,” and we’re doing another piece, and
then we’re doing a piece that Stephen Hatfield wrote for the kids, and it’s a
Newfoundland piece. And the second half says, “Now the newspaper said that the
life that we led is faded; b’ys it’s gone. But, we’re just takin’ stock, and we’re still
on this rock, and the breakers roll on.” Almost every time they sing it, somebody
wells up, and I said—I wanted them to help me with programming—I said “How
should we start our program? How should we end it?” And I said, “I’m not going
to tell you what I think—how many people think we should end with [the Mozart]?
[“Danza”]? I was 100% sure they were going to say we should end with
“Danza” because it’s this fast Latin American tune that has this phenomenal
ending that builds and builds and builds, and they’re going to run out into the
audience, and they have these red flags and ribbons—I was 100% positive—but
not one of them put their hand up. I said “How many people think we should end
with [the Hatfield] tune?” Every kid in the room said we have to end with this—
and look, I’m almost in tears now—and I was speechless, and these are 12, 13, 14 year old kids. I said, “Why?” And they said, “Well, Miss Kate, this is us.” I can’t even tell you how powerful that was.

Aside from recognizing the relationship between music and identity in her own life and in the experiences of her choristers, Kate recognizes that the same relationship extends to the community at large as well, and this informs some of the musical goals she has for her choirs.

Even with the kids at St. Aidan’s—next year they want to do a trip, and I told them that what I’d love to do is find a Newfoundland folksong from a community, have it arranged, and bring it to that community: “This is from your community; this is a song that people in your community made.”

As a Newfoundlander, I find it difficult to add anything to the feelings Kate has expressed, but I understand them completely. Hearing music from Newfoundland not only fills me with a tremendous sense of pride, but it transports me to another place—to home. Very recently, at a pub in the west-end of Toronto, only one block from my apartment, I had the opportunity to attend a performance of the March Hare, an annual production that features a number of musicians and authors from Newfoundland. To my delight, one of the musicians was Denis Ryan. Ryan had been a member of the Irish-Newfoundland trio, Ryan’s Fancy, who had been very popular in the 1970s and 1980s.

As a child, one of the albums that my family listened to regularly during our Sunday dinners was by Ryan’s Fancy. When Denis began to sing in that Toronto pub, I was overwhelmed with a sense of home. It was not long before tears began to stream down my face. The song that stirred so many emotions was the Newfoundland song, “Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary’s,” by Otto Kelland (1947). The lines that unleashed the most tears came from the following verse:
When I reach that last big shoal,
Where the ground swells break asunder,
Where the wild sands roll to the surge’s toll,
Let me be a man and take it,
When my dory fails to make it.

Like Kate’s young choristers who said, “Well, Miss Kate, this is us,” Kelland’s lyrics immediately connected me to every Newfoundlander who has lost somebody at sea, even though I never have. As Baker (2001) writes, “‘Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary’s’ . . . captures the feeling Newfoundlanders, both resident and expatriate, still have today for the place of the cod fishery in their heritage, and the song evokes a strong emotional response whether the listener has ever fished or not” (p. 19). The emotions ran deeper because those lyrics were being sung live by a musician who had played such an integral role in my musical development as a child, and in the shared experiences of my family. Further, I was sitting in a pub, surrounded by other Newfoundlanders, only one of whom I had ever met before. There was no embarrassment when I began to cry—I wasn’t the only one. This was one experience among many that enable me to understand the significance of Kate’s knowledge that the music of Newfoundland and the identity of being a Newfoundlander are inextricably linked.

**Knowledge of self: Summary.** Kate’s knowledge of her strengths as a teacher and as a learner enables her to lead her choirs with confidence and with a sense of professional responsibility for improving her practice. Kate knows that her strengths lie in her teaching abilities and her leadership qualities. As a learner, Kate knows that her ability to foster a sense of community developed from learning from the strengths of others. She knows that being open to learning from the outstanding musicianship of a
group of high school students has contributed to her growing confidence as a musician and as a leader. Further, she knows that through even the most challenging experiences, there are important lessons to be learned. Recognizing herself as a reflexive practitioner, Kate knows that she works to improve her practice on a daily basis by having burning questions to advance her professional knowledge and by reflecting on experience to move forward with her teaching practice. As a teenager, Kate learned that there was a special relationship between the music of Newfoundland and her identity as a proud Newfoundlander. That lesson has been reinforced in her professional life, as a Newfoundlander living away from home, and as a choral music educator working with young Newfoundlanders in St. John’s. The connection between music and identity informs her decisions about repertoire selection and the performance goals of her ensembles.

**Knowledge of Teaching Role**

Kate has a clear vision of what her role as a teacher entails. This vision holds across all teaching contexts, regardless of the age of her students and choristers. She knows that in order to meet her goals as a choral music educator, it is necessary that she approach each of her teaching contexts with an ability to maintain perspective. She works to instil confidence in her students/choristers as well as make a positive difference in their lives. She frames all of her teaching with sensitivity and compassion. Finally, a sincere effort to understand the differences between boys and girls/men and women that affect their learning in a choral context underlies all that Kate does.

**Maintaining perspective.** One of the most important things Kate brings to teaching such a diverse group of people is her effort to maintain perspective and to
understand that there are multiple sides to every story—that not everyone experiences the same thing in the same way.

*I always want to make sure I’m not just creating my own reality, and I’m always trying to keep myself in check. I think you always have to sit back and realize that there are five different stories to every one story—that everybody who comes to you, every time you get into some kind of a tiff, every time we have to talk to a professor, every time we have to talk to a teacher, every time somebody comes and says they can’t make this rehearsal, that you just have to have the integrity to realize that every person and every situation has five different lenses, and you’ve got to be able to see those different lenses, even if somebody is being nasty to you or awful—that’s the only way you’re really going to survive with any kind of sense of self and to be able to be a part of a community, whether it’s a school community or a greater choral community or musical community. Sometimes we say to ourselves, “I know I’m not always right,” but we don’t really believe that. You’ve really got to be able to sit back and say there are so many different ways of seeing something and everybody has their own way of doing it. But then that also gives you the strength to move on with decisions you need to make.

Kate attributes this sense of perspective to her father, who always gives everyone the benefit of the doubt, no matter the situation. Listening to Kate talk about the importance of maintaining perspective, I gather that this sense of perspective also enables her to analyze situations and make decisions without personalizing them. For example, Kate shared how it can be difficult to ask choristers to leave the men’s or women’s choir because they do not have the time to commit to learning their music or to a regular rehearsal schedule. I have been a member of many ensembles through the years when the expectation was that they were to be your first priority. I have seen choir and band directors have harsh words with members who wanted to leave an ensemble or miss a rehearsal because they wanted to spend more time volunteering at a hospital or preparing
for a starring role in a local musical. These ensemble directors took it personally that their ensemble was not more important than other commitments. Kate recognizes that people have busy lives and competing priorities. While she is never happy to see someone leave—or to have to ask somebody to leave—she does not personalize the situation. She moves forward knowing that such decisions are for the good of the ensemble as a whole.

**Instilling confidence.** Having grown up with teachers who did not often show confidence in her own future as a musician, Kate recognizes the tremendous power the actions and words of a teacher can hold. She endeavours to instil confidence in her students so that they may achieve their goals and feel good about themselves as they do so. Growing up, Kate was not pushed to practice by her parents, and this contributed to showing up unprepared for piano and cello lessons. Instead of inspiring confidence and motivating Kate to practice, her teachers reinforced Kate’s less than enthusiastic attitude towards practicing by not showing any faith in her abilities as a musician.

*I took piano lessons, and that was the first time I had ever heard from somebody, “You’re never going to do anything with this.”* I hated playing piano, and I never practiced, and Mom and Dad never ever pushed me to do anything and that’s part of—that’s part of one of the big regrets is that I feel—and in part of my personality—it’s only now I’m starting to learn follow-through, and I never had that as a teenager. I never felt like a good cello player because I never practiced enough because I never had follow-through. And I’m not blaming my parents, but I’m just saying that’s not how I was raised growing up, and so he was right, I mean in his eyes, he was completely right that “You don’t always come to your lessons; you never practice; you’re never going to do this,” but that was like—it was so—I hated him for that.

Kate can recall one time when she did feel good about herself as a cellist. Her confidence did not come from the way she played, but from an opportunity provided to
her by her high school orchestra teacher. Through that experience, Kate learned that self-esteem can be bolstered simply by the actions of a teacher.

*The orchestra—I remember my second year, I got to be principal cellist of the school orchestra, and it was the one time I felt good at what I did, in terms of being a player—one time—one time only did I ever feel good about my cello playing. And it was just because [my teacher] put me in a leadership position. And yeah, I had a [private] cello teacher that taught me a lot, but he didn’t have a lot of confidence in me. And again, I can understand that stuff now because I didn’t practice enough and all of that. [But] kids know. They know when you don’t have confidence in them. You don’t have to say a word. He didn’t have a lot of confidence in me, so I never did. But [my orchestra conductor] put me in that role, not that I played any better, not that I did any better, or not that it even made me practice more, but I felt good about it—I really felt amazing about it. I do remember the feeling of being so proud. And because of that, orchestra was so important to me.*

Kate grounds her teaching practice in a set of principles that does not vary, no matter the age of her students and/or choristers. She takes lessons about being a “good” teacher from one setting and readily applies them to another. While her lessons in building confidence came from her own experiences as an elementary and high school student, she has learned that it is just as important to carry this into the teaching of adults as well.

*I really think every human being is an adult but still a kid, and it’s like an open wound in university because they’re at this point where they’re so highly trained, and they know so much, but it can go either way with them. If they’re encouraged, if they’re pushed in the right direction, if they feel good about themselves, the sky’s the limit.*
No matter the age or performance level of her choirs, Kate brings a sense of confidence in her choristers to her rehearsals so that they will believe in themselves and enjoy their experiences making music with her.

[Many of my choristers] know that my strength as a teacher—as a choral conductor—as a person—is bringing people together and making them feel really good about themselves, because in the end, that’s all we want—is to feel valued and feel good about ourselves.

In each set of rehearsal observation notes, I had written something about Kate’s use of positive language, especially when working through challenging sections of music. Kate only chooses music for her ensembles that she believes they are capable of performing at a high level of excellence. Through her rehearsal techniques, Kate does not let her choristers lose sight of the fact that she fully believes in their abilities to work through even the most difficult pieces in their repertoire. Kate’s ability to build confidence was remarkably present in her church choir, where a line-up of people formed in front of me during their rehearsal break. Each person in that line wanted to share with me how Kate had transformed the sense of morale in that choir. While Kate’s confidence-building work in the other choirs mostly took the form of encouraging her choristers through technically challenging repertoire, in the church choir, it was about bolstering their confidence as musicians—in fact, it was about getting them to believe they were indeed musicians. Kate used a great deal of musical terminology in the church choir rehearsal and interjected definitions whenever clarification was needed. Several of the choristers shared with me that they had never felt good about themselves as a choir before Kate came along. One chorister, a university student from outside the province,
felt compelled to send me an e-mail message about the difference Kate had made in his life:

When I moved here three years ago I never felt as though I belonged anywhere in St. John’s other than my residence house, and with a few on-campus groups. I joined the church choir just as Kate had taken the reins, and [had] begun to turn the choir into what it is today. Through this warm welcoming experience I was able to . . . feel part of a community . . . When you move to a new city it makes a difference when you’re meeting up with someone and [her] first words to you once you get there is “Hello Friend,” with a smile on her face . . . I’ve never seen someone who truly loves what she does and lives it entirely through her everyday life . . . Most of all, through meeting her, you meet someone who does what she does selflessly. (confidential communication; October 24, 2007)

Kate not only built his confidence as a musician (he has gone on to become involved in the larger choral community in St. John’s), but as a young man displaced from his home community. His sentiments were echoed by many in the church choir and the women’s choir who approached me to share their feelings about Kate.

Making a difference. Kate finds teaching to be most rewarding when she knows she is making a difference in the lives of her students. The nature of the difference varies, depending on the context, but at the end of the day, knowing she has made a difference is a strong indicator that she is succeeding as an educator. While teaching at Westbridge Public, an urban school near Toronto, Kate encountered many students who were living in challenging home situations. She and her colleagues worked tirelessly to inspire their students by engaging them in a lively arts education program, providing them with creative outlets for self-expression.

_The teachers were all young and kind of bushy-tailed, and by the end of four years, almost every kid in that school was singing—we did a CD, took them on_
tour, did shows, had boys singing. Now, it was pulling teeth—every bit of the way—I never would exaggerate—there was not one day when I didn’t feel my blood pressure go up to here because the kids were—but even now, when I get kind of down about things, I’ll stop and say, “That’s what I was meant to do.” That was the one time I felt really good. Every single day, even though it was hard, and there were kids throwing things at me and cursing and swearing. That was probably the most joyful time ever—no question. Because I think you know—you know that—you know that you’re making a huge difference—a huge difference in the lives of these kids.

Since returning to St. John’s, Kate has found herself working primarily with students, no matter young or old, who have chosen to sing in a choir. For the most part, her choristers have a variety of opportunities to express themselves musically in their daily lives. Hence, the difference she strives to bring to their lives has a different focus than the one she worked towards at Westbridge. For the students she currently teaches at St. Aidan’s, the difference she is making in her students’ lives is helping them expand their musician identities beyond that of instrumentalists. Her students all participate in an extraordinary band program, so they fully believe in themselves as instrumentalists. It has been a challenge to develop that same confidence in themselves as singers. But it is happening:

[During] my second year [at St. Aidan’s], they had [a] principal who really valued and wanted to build a choral program and was really supportive, and the kids started to think of themselves as singers, and not merely, “Oh, we play in the band.” (Because they have a phenomenal band program, as you know). But, “We play in the band, AND we’re going to come out for choir.” They’re fierce musicians there because of the band program, but [during] my second year there, they started really, really thinking and singing as singers and feeling like, “Oh yeah, my body is an instrument; this is really cool; this is a really neat way to express myself, especially musically.”
No matter the context, Kate works towards bringing a sense of beauty to her choristers’ experiences with music. The primary difference she hopes to make is on a personal level.

*If any rehearsal that I had any part in would be the most beautiful two hours of that person’s life—week. That’s what I think the role of the conductor should be. And not beautiful—touchy, feely, but beautiful sometimes, “I needed that kick in the ass.” That would be my goal for any choir—that these two hours or hour and a half or three hours, is such an incredibly beautiful time in their week that [they] can’t live without it. So that’s what I see my primary goal as being.*

Aside from the self-selected few who approached me directly during rehearsal breaks, I did not have conversations with any of the choristers. Such conversations would have fallen outside the scope of data collection for this study. While I do not have the words of choristers to validate their experiences in Kate’s rehearsals, I do have my own observations of their body language and the tone of their interpersonal exchanges as they left their rehearsals. Aside from the school choir, all other choirs met during the evening. It was inspiring to see them leave with seemingly more energy than they had exhibited at the beginning of rehearsal. During one of the youth choir rehearsals, Kate paid particular attention to inspiring this energy. It was a cold, wet, and windy October evening, and Kate asked the choristers to visualize the most beautiful day from the summer, to remember how it felt, and to keep that feeling. Throughout the entire rehearsal, Kate spoke with energy, and this appeared to keep the spirit of the choir uplifted.

**Demonstrating sensitivity and compassion.** Kate strives to relate to all of her students and choristers with sensitivity and compassion, recognizing that each individual brings vulnerabilities to the table, no matter the age or context. Each person is in a process of moving forward, continuing to develop as a human being in a complex world.
When teaching at Westbridge, Kate drew upon her own childhood experiences to relate to her students. Even without explicitly sharing her background with them, the students seemed to intuitively know that Kate understood them and genuinely cared about them.

*I connected with those kids—not that I grew up in a really tough, tough situation, but I did not grow up in a privileged family situation. Although I was involved in strings and music, when Mom passed away, [I] got involved with some pretty tough kids that were selling drugs, and so that was part of the world that I grew up in—there were kids around me—and I won’t lie either—I experimented with things and stuff, but I never, I never stepped past the line where it affected my life. I know this is a long way to go about it, but I had a connection with those kids. Those were kids that if they didn’t like you, they weren’t going to not say it. Like you knew exactly where you were with those kids, and I loved that about them. I felt at home in that situation. They could probably never articulate it, but they sensed that I had a true kinship with them and respect for them, and I think if I reflect back on it, that’s why it worked so well.*

As discussed previously, Kate is open to learning from everyone around her, and she is reflexive in her approach to improving her practice as a choral music educator—this extends to improving the ways in which she interacts with her students and choristers on a more personal level.

*I’ve learned even more so to look at every kid like “You’re not somebody waiting to happen—you’re somebody.” That has happened to me in the last four or five years, and mostly because of things that kids will say to me after something has happened. Like you know, you’ll have an experience with a kid—like you’re talking or a parent calls and says “This is how my child is feeling,” and you’re realizing, “Oh my god, this is a thinking, feeling person that is processing everything I say and do.” And some people realize and some people don’t that these are people, these are human beings. And every single word that comes out of your mouth is affecting them.*
Kate explained that it was an encounter with a young male private student that made her realize how delicate the issue of the changing voice can be with boys.

Following that encounter, Kate has been mindful to approach the issue with sensitivity and compassion.

It’s only [been] the last couple of years that I have actually sat back and gotten over myself to know that this has got to be a huge shift for a young boy. And it’s when I came back [to St. John’s] and started private teaching again, and I had some young boys as students, and I kind of saw them through [the voice change], that I [realized] this completely affects the whole life. Craig McDonald was probably the best example, and this only happened a couple of years ago. He came into his lesson [one day], and he said “I’m not singing anymore, Miss Kate.” And I said “what are you talking about?” and he said “because I lost my voice.” And I said, “You can’t have lost your voice. We talked about this, your voice is going to change.” And he said, “But it’s gone.” He was one of the kids that it happened quickly. He was devastated, [that was] his identity, this gorgeous flutey soprano voice. Years ago working with the boys’ choir, I’d make jokes about it, but now I’m so much more aware that you have to make those kids feel like you know this is so incredible. You have to. I find it hard because you want to impress upon them how beautiful their soprano voices are, but in doing that, you have to be careful, because they’re going to lose that. It’s really hard. And I have no problem with the girls saying that boys have got it made—they have both voices, and we only have one. I treat them a lot differently than I used to—a lot differently, because there’s this whole identity with boys, and you know, the whole thing about sexuality, and masculinity, and so much stuff wrapped up in that.

While it is evident in observing Kate’s rehearsals that her teaching embodies the qualities of sensitivity and compassion, she finds it difficult to always connect with each of her choristers on a personalized, individual level. As she works to find balance in her
professional life, Kate wishes she had more time to personally connect with her choristers once the rehearsal is over, especially when she senses that something may be wrong.

_There’s never enough time to check on people, you know, like with all the kids and in the middle of the week you go to a rehearsal and you can see in somebody’s eyes, and you know that there’s something going on. If I could have an ideal situation, I’d be living in a place where the arts were valued so much that people were getting paid a $100,000 a year to administer a program so that I didn’t have to do everything else, so that I could [just] do the music and think about the personal relationships and have the time to, when somebody in rehearsal is really not feeling great and I know it, to [always] phone and say, “How are ya doing?”_

The emotional warmth, the welcoming smiles, and the positive language that encompass Kate’s rehearsal spaces told me on an intuitive level that she cares about her choristers, that she is sensitive to providing them with a supportive learning environment, that she is careful to protect and nurture their levels of confidence. Observing Kate work with young boys, I was taken by the way in which she encouraged them to sing in whichever octave felt most comfortable to them, without singling them out. She honoured their soprano voices by explaining the history of the male voice and the important role the male soprano voice has played in music history.

**Understanding differences between boys and girls, men and women.** Kate conducts a boys’ choir, multiple mixed youth choirs, a men’s choir, and a women’s choir, and she feels most like herself when she is working with boys and girls, men and women in single-sex groupings. Recognized in the professional community for her special ability to work with boys in a choral setting, when Kate first moved back to St. John’s, she was called upon to start a boys’ choir within an existing youth choir organization.
It’s funny because I love working with women and girls together and boys and men together—more than I like working with the mixture of them. Because—I don’t know what it is but it’s more—for me—their personalities are more real—and I don’t know if that’s a good way to put it. It’s like little boys are more little boys when they’re all together. Little girls are more little girls—they’re allowed to be who they are as basic human beings when they’re separated.

I observed Kate work with her men’s choir after I had seen her work with the women’s and youth choirs. Immediately I noticed there was something different about the way she related to the men. Like all of the other choirs, the men’s rehearsal had an atmosphere imbued with professionalism and respect, but there were light jabs and a subtle air of sarcasm in Kate’s interactions with the men.

I have rehearsal with a women’s group on Sunday and [a men’s group] on Monday night, and that has been—I don’t want to say difficult because it’s not a difficulty—trying to find how I can be the most effective. But being true to who I am as a person with a group of all women and a group of all men has been the biggest challenge for me. Because, you know, men are different than women. Boys are different than girls, but it’s very instinctive for me. I’m very different with the girls than I am with the boys.

The questions that drive her scholarly pursuits in choral conducting, as well as her professional development primarily focus on understanding the differences between the sexes as they relate to the choral context.

In the next couple of years I’m deciding, so do I want to do a PhD? Or DMA? But, my burning questions now are about—there are differences between men, women, boys, girls, male, female—there are differences. And as a teacher-conductor, are we different? Should we be different? Can we be different? How can we be different?
Kate recognizes that it is not only the conductor that relates differently to men and women, but audiences have very different responses to men’s choirs than they do to women’s choirs.

[There’s] a different relationship with people hearing [men sing]. Like, there’s something so tender and incredibly raw about men in voice singing as opposed to women singing. And poor women, I mean we get the short end of it. I say it all the time, because you can get a group of men up singing, and musically, it doesn’t have to be as outstanding, but it is every bit as thrilling and exciting and touching as the best women’s choir in the world.

While I observed differences between the atmosphere of the men’s choir and the other choirs, overall, I noted that Kate was “still the same conductor in each setting—high standards, admits to errors when they are hers, provides musical leadership” (field notes; November 23, 2007). While I may have not been able to discern any differences in the boys’, girls’, men’s, and women’s ways of being, I was very much aware of my presence as a woman in the men’s choir rehearsal. It was not a sense of objectification, but a sense of otherness. I was surprised by that sense of awareness, as I personally knew many of the men in the choir. Had I encountered the same group of men in a mixed choir setting, I do not believe I would have had the same feelings.

Kate’s attention to the differences between boys and girls, men and women is a significant aspect of her commitment to her professional learning. Getting boys to sing and keeping them singing are problems that have pervaded choral music education for many years, and they continue to be addressed in music education research (e.g., Harrison, Welch, & Adler, 2012). While Kate has had tremendous success in getting boys to sing, she credits more to intuition than anything else. Her commitment to wanting to articulate the differences between boys and girls, men and women and how those
differences should inform the practice of choral music educators is a further example of her reflexivity that was discussed in the previous section.

**Knowledge of teaching role: Summary.** Kate knows that anything a teacher says or does can have a lasting effect on students. Informed by lessons from her father, experiences being a student, and her lived experiences as a choral music educator in a variety of contexts, Kate has developed a set of beliefs about what she must do in order to meet her goals as an educator. Through her father, Kate learned the importance of maintaining a sense of perspective, understanding that neither she nor her ensembles are at the centre of anyone else’s realities. Through her early experiences as a student, she learned the necessity of being able to instill confidence in her choristers, understanding that everybody needs to feel good about themselves and to feel valued. Through her experiences as a choral music educator, Kate has learned to work towards making a difference in the lives of her choristers by providing them with opportunities to experience moments of beauty through music; to demonstrate sensitivity and compassion, tending to the emotional needs of her choristers; and to be conscious of the social and learning differences between boys and girls, men and women.

**Knowledge of Musical Experience**

Through my observations and conversations with Kate, it appears to me that Kate’s knowledge of two particular aspects of musical experience contributes most to her professional knowledge. For Kate, the experience of being a choral musician should be joyful, and it is necessary to perform music with a high level of musicianship.

**The choral experience as joyful.** From a young age, Kate knew she wanted to be a music teacher, and more specific than that, she knew she wanted her work to be with
choirs. When Kate was in elementary school, music class was known as “singing,” as that was all that music class entailed. Kate remembers it well and with fondness.

*I remember being happy sitting in the desks and singing—that’s for sure. It was just such a feeling of power—of the whole class singing together. It was really wonderful.*

As a choral conductor, Kate strives to bring that same sense of enjoyment to her ensembles. Not only does she want her choristers to have that same experience of joy in the choral context, but Kate feels a tremendous sense of satisfaction when people around her are happy.

*I get so much when people are around me and are happy. It just puts me in a whole different place, almost like this is what life is supposed to be like. And for me, the rehearsals—the most important thing is that people walk away saying, “That was one of the best hours of my week—I really did something for me—I really loved it.”*

With her school choir in particular, Kate has worked hard, not only to bring the students to a place where they identify as singers, but to a place where they truly enjoy being singers who love making music together.

[They are] not necessarily the best choir in the world, but they are chomping at the bit to sing—to be together, and sing and make music. And when you’ve got a bunch of kids that are loving singing “Dirait-on,” Lauridsen, all this stuff, and are saying, “Oh Miss, listen to that chord,” there’s nothing better than that.

In addition to finding joy making music as an ensemble, Kate hopes that each of her choristers will experience the joy of the transformative potential of music, the joy of being lifted to another place through music.

*I think an excellent musical experience [is] an experience where you feel challenged and you’re totally filled up with what music does for you. In the
choirs, when we finish a song—and it can be with the 7-year old boys or the 27-year old men or [a] 50-year old woman—when they finish a piece of music or sing a phrase or sight-read, and they stop, and they kind of look at each other and go, “Wow.” That whole idea of, “This is so unearthly; this music is so unearthly.” To experience the music in a really positive way, in a way that’s wonderful—to learn it, and to go through the learning process where it feels that you really connected with the music.

The joy that Kate creates in her rehearsals is most evident when her choristers have just successfully tackled a particularly challenging excerpt or piece of music. The rooms fill with smiles of pride and accomplishment. More interesting though, is to see evidence of joy even when the choristers have not yet reached their musical goals. During one of the men’s choir rehearsals, the tenors fell apart as they were working on “We Rise Again,” a piece they would be singing jointly with the women’s choir for an upcoming fundraiser performance. Being so close to a performance, Kate could have taken them to task for not knowing their music, but instead she laughed along with them. I jotted in my observation journal, “There is enormous trust in this room” (field notes; October 14, 2007). During one of the church choir rehearsals, I noted, “A strong sense that they enjoy—no, LOVE—being here . . . Such joy and humour in the room. Laughter is in the room” (field notes; October 17, 2007). And, as mentioned previously, the choristers from each ensemble walked away at the end of their rehearsals more energized than they had appeared at the beginning.

**High standards of musicianship.** When sharing her life stories, Kate spoke freely about not being motivated to practice as a young child taking piano and cello lessons. In high school, though, she began to appreciate the value of performing music at a level of excellence.
For a kid who wanted to do music, and wanted to go on and be a musician and be a music teacher, it was phenomenal. [I have] memories of loving being there, loving the music, loving being pushed to be excellent. High school felt very good musically.

When Kate landed a job as a choral music teacher at Grant Collegiate, a suburban Toronto school with a well-established music program, the insecurities she had felt as a cellist rose to the surface once again. While she was confident in her abilities as an educator, she was not as confident in her abilities as a musician. But, her self-doubt did not hold her back—she was anxious to use the new position as an opportunity to find out if she could indeed be a good teacher and a good musician at the same time.

Even though—and I feel, it’s hard to say this—I learned so much working at Westbridge, and I will always say those five years were the best five years of my life, it goes back to that cellist in me—there was always something in me that was like, “I’m a good teacher . . . Am I a good musician?” Which is so [hard] to grapple with, and I had this burning desire to find out, “Am I a good musician?” And so, finally that opportunity came up, to be a good teacher and a good musician at the same time—to try to see if that [could be] the case.

Kate embraced the opportunity to move to a new school, to work with young musicians who were used to making music with a high level of musicianship. This excellence had been recognized in the form of numerous festival awards in the past. While Kate found that intimidating, she also had a strong sense that it was where she wanted to be, as the opportunity to teach students who were willing to engage in a high level of music making felt like a dream job to her.

It was very stressful because it was a very high profile job, and it was the first time in my life I had ever had chest pain from [the] stress of performing because those kids had always gone in the Kiwanis [Music Festival of Greater Toronto] and won. [And I was] loving every minute of it and hating every minute of it
because I didn’t think I should be there or [that] I was good enough to be there, but realizing, “Okay, I could grow into this.” And then by the end of the year being comfy enough to [believe], “I may not be the best person for this, but I know that I could grow and develop, and I love this because this is a combination of teaching and being able to be involved with music at a really high level of music making.”

Kate’s opportunity to teach at Grant Collegiate was short-lived, as she and her husband decided to move back to St. John’s the following year. But, it was not long after Kate returned to St. John’s that she began chasing her dream of forming a women’s choir. She turned to the best musicians she knew to get things rolling. The Ryan sisters come from an incredibly musical family, some of whom are professional musicians, all of whom are fine—and joyful—musicians.

_I called the Ryan sisters, who are those five sisters I think you know, and got them in a meeting in one of their basements, and said to them, “Listen, I want to start a choir, and if I think of any musicians that are incredible in any way, it’s you,” because they are phenomenal singers; they’re fierce-, fierce-, fiercely dedicated musicians._

Kate consistently acknowledges the hard work of her ensembles, and because she has established such a positive learning climate, she is able to keep asking for more—to push the boundaries of their musical potential. Kate’s choristers oblige without hesitation. Not only has Kate built their confidence so that they believe in their own potential, but her own commitment and dedication inspires them to work just as hard.

_Sunday night, we had this [women’s choir] rehearsal, and we finished, and it was such a good rehearsal. We’re doing this piece for Festival 500, and it is a killer, and we’re trying to have it memorized, and we did it, and sang to the end for the first time, and everyone started clapping—it was so exciting. And then we finished rehearsal, and I said, “Thank you so much. What a great rehearsal, and
everyone’s working so hard, and everyone’s so busy, and I think we’re going to do really well in the festival.” We have two rehearsals left, and you know, I wanted to make sure they knew how far we had come, but we still have to work really hard, and I said to them, “This is the best I’ve heard the choir, and we’re really doing well.” And one [of the women] said, “You know, Kate . . .” How did she word it? . . . She just basically said, “You know, you have inspired us to do this.”

Kate is reluctant to commit to performance opportunities unless she knows that the circumstances are such that the full potential of the musicians involved can be reached. When Kate was asked to teach at St. Aidan’s, she was not sure how well it would work, as she was only able to work with the students one hour per week. Without more rehearsal time, Kate was not convinced that they could achieve the high level of performance she believed necessary for success.

It’s either you’re going to be involved in something that’s really good—or not. And when I say “good” I don’t mean good necessarily performance-wise, but I think it does have to be that way. The music making is ten percent of it, and it has to be excellent, that’s just a given.

The students at St. Aidan’s are very dedicated to the choir, and even with little rehearsal time, they have proven that their strong musicianship skills enable them to produce incredible results. During a lunchtime rehearsal shortly before a Christmas concert, I saw how challenging that choir context can be, but also how, together, the choristers and Kate make it worth it. That particular day, the choir was rehearsing in a small gymnasium. I sat facing the choir as students entered in clusters. The atmosphere was a little manic, as most of the students had just finished writing tests. Many of the choristers were missing, as they were still writing their tests. There was adrenaline rushing through the room—they were days away from their Christmas concert, and this
would be their second rehearsal of the Christmas repertoire. Through it all, Kate did not get caught up in the emotions of the adolescents that encompassed the room. I noted, “She’s so calm with them. Words are not totally memorized yet, but Kate is not stressing about this” (field notes; November 23, 2007). They rehearsed two pieces they had been introduced to in the previous rehearsal, and then they began to sight-read “This Little Babe,” from Britten’s *A Ceremony of Carols*. The students gave their complete focus and attention to the piece, and within minutes, they were singing a complex melody with irregular metre in three-part canon. As I witnessed them put this piece together, I wrote, “This comes together amazingly well. There’s so much trust in the room.” My notes for that afternoon end with, “Less than one hour for rehearsal—beautiful!” (field notes; November 23, 2007). The rehearsal ended with a sense of eager anticipation—they looked forward to putting everything together with the other students who had missed the rehearsal, and they were excited about their upcoming Christmas concert.

This example speaks to Kate’s trust in the musicianship of her students at St. Aidan’s. Kate knows that even with minimal rehearsal time, they will pull the new repertoire together. Because Kate maintains high performance standards, if it were not for her students’ excellent musicianship, she would not put them in the position of having to learn new music just days before a concert.

**Knowledge of musical experience: Summary.** In this section, I have described two aspects of Kate’s knowledge about musical experience that most inform her approach to teaching music. As a child, Kate first learned that the experience of choral singing could be joyful. Kate strives to share that experience with each of her ensembles. As a high school student, Kate learned the value of hard work, and she discovered the
satisfaction of performing music at a high level of musicianship. Today, Kate maintains high standards of excellence for both herself and for her choristers.

Core Values

Kate’s knowledge and understanding of herself, of the role of a teacher, and of music are integral components of her professional knowledge as a choral music educator. In order to better understand Kate’s professional knowledge, it is also necessary to explore the core values that inform how that knowledge gets put into practice. Throughout our interviews, and as I observed her work with her choirs, it became clear that Kate places high personal value on community and respect, each which plays an important role in her professional knowledge and practice.

Community. The notion of community continually made its way to the surface in my conversations with Kate. One of Kate’s earliest choral experiences was singing with her church choir, for which she begged her mother’s permission to join. Kate’s family didn’t attend church on a weekly basis, but Kate felt pulled there, not just for the experience of singing, but to feel a part of the community. Prior to moving to Toronto, at various points, Kate sang in and directed choirs at two different Catholic churches in St. John’s. When she returned home after her time in Toronto, she became the choir director at a third Catholic parish. As she had not been connected to a church during her Toronto years, she was reluctant to take on a new church job. But it wasn’t long before she felt at home again.


text removed due to context

Church has always been a really, really important thing for me. However, Catholicism has always [troubled me]. But the idea of community—and the older I get, the more I realize, I think I was a pack animal in a different life because it’s community that is—it’s so important to me. I can’t even find the words for it, but
the group of people, and the dynamics between people. And I'm there, and I feel like a part of my life is back—to be with the church community again.

For many musicians, participating in music festivals, whether it be as adjudicators, clinicians, or performers, is another way to partake in music at the community level. When I asked Kate how she felt about doing adjudication work, she said that she prefers clinic-style festivals and workshops (as opposed to traditional adjudication/contest style festivals) that give her the opportunity to work directly with the singers, to meet groups of new people, and to participate with them in the joyful aspects of choral singing. Even without knowing the singers on a personal level, there is joy in working with them because they are all part of a broader choral community.

If it’s a workshop situation, then it’s completely different [than a traditional festival] because then you get to meet all these great people, and kids are so fun! You just get a high on it. It’s almost like a drug—like a day of seeing new kids, one after the other—and new people. Or you know, even going in—every now and then when Allan is out of town, I’ll go in and [rehearse] his choir—it’s kind of like being the aunt or uncle coming in—it’s so great—you get to go in and just play, and have a phenomenal time with these people who are always there because they want to be involved in a choir. How much better can it get than that?

The value that Kate places on community is evident in the goals that she has for her choirs. Not only does she want them to feel part of a choral community, but she wants her choirs to contribute to others’ sense of community, in Newfoundland and beyond.

[Choirs], community, and social justice are big things for me, and it’s something that’s always on my mind. [The women’s choir]—in four or five years—what I’d love to do is go somewhere and help build a community centre for women to sing—to do crafts together—to sing together—to be together as women.
Kate’s youth, men’s, and women’s choirs each maintain a busy concert season; yet, each of those same choirs regularly participate in community events. During the time I spent observing rehearsals, the men’s and women’s choirs were preparing to perform in a benefit concert for breast cancer, organized by another women’s choir in the city. The youth, men’s and women’s choirs were each preparing to participate in Festival 500 as well. International in scope, local choirs do not take their participation in the festival for granted, and they work very hard, not only to ready themselves for performances, but to unofficially host the visiting choirs as well, and to make them feel a part of the local choral community during their time in St. John’s.

**Respect.** With numerous prestigious choral awards to her name, Kate has achieved tremendous success as a choral conductor, though she does not take full personal credit for these achievements. She describes the foundations of her music education through the Sisters of Mercy as having been instrumental to her success. Kate’s respect for the contribution the nuns have made to music education in Newfoundland is evident in the anecdote she shared about meeting Sister Ellen, an Order of Canada recipient and former music teacher in the Catholic school system in St. John’s.

*I have just this year met Sister Ellen. I never knew her at all, only by reputation, and Maureen [Kate’s church organist and musical director] is a good friend of hers, and I said to Maureen, “I’ve never met her; I’ve heard so much about her; I would love to have a conversation with her.” I was terrified, terrified, but we sat down [for lunch], and just to listen to her stories. She’s a fiercely, fiercely incredible woman. She’s in her 80s, and we didn’t have a “Gloria” that was working at the church, so she [wrote] a new “Gloria” [for us]. She’s unbelievable; I’m just . . . getting to know her now a little bit. I have huge, huge amounts of respect for the nuns—for what they’ve done—I really do.*
Kate also attributes her success to the musicians who choose to sing in her choirs. As discussed earlier, Kate believes it is important for her singers to experience the joy that a choral environment can bring, as well as perform with a high level of musicianship. She is conscientious of the fact that in order to achieve those goals, the musicians need to feel respected. Kate sees this as a human need—the need to feel respected. Kate shows her respect in her interactions with her singers in the rehearsal environment, in the follow-up phone calls she makes when she senses all is not right with somebody, and in her preparation for rehearsals.

*You have to find time to get your scores ready; you have to find time to make sure the music is ready, and then the organizing of it all—even with the kids up at St. Aidan’s, I’m there for [only] an hour—sometimes two hours a week . . . and for them to feel like they’re a choir, it means me being organized about everything—rehearsals, planning for the future for them, them knowing I’m thinking about next year. I’m thinking about what repertoire we’re [going to do]; I’m thinking, “Are we going to go on a little tour?” I’m thinking, “Are we going to do [the] Kiwanis [Music Festival of St. John’s], or are we going to do [the] Rotary [Music Festival]? ” I’m planning all that stuff, and they need to know that. They need to feel that.*

Kate believes that all of her choristers need to feel that their voices are valued. She also believes that treating them with respect has to be something that is a core component of her way of being in the world and not something that she has to consciously think about doing. Kate does not need to remind herself to treat her choristers with respect; it is an authentic expression of her feelings towards them.

*[It’s necessary] that you feel valued as a musician: you feel you have a voice; you feel that you are respected; you feel that you are a contributor. I think those are [the] most important things. I treat the teenagers and the younger ones, I would like to say, with as much awe [as the adults]. When I go into a rehearsal with the*
women’s choir and the men’s choir, I really am in awe of the incredible musicians and people—and [I have] true respect and care—and I’m working towards and believe that’s how I’m starting to be with the younger kids as well. And it’s kind of a way of being—not a way of making yourself do it—you can’t get up every morning and think about that.

Kate also shows her respect for her ensembles by giving her best as a conductor. She expects a high level of commitment and musicianship from them, and she gives them nothing less in return.

I think the strength that I bring is the fact that I am in total awe that they (her choristers) are willing to come in and make music together, with me, in that leadership role, and I have so much respect for that, and I treat it so delicately because I am a firm believer that at any minute, things could shift, and when you’re in that kind of a place of responsibility, of leadership, you have a responsibility to do the absolute best that you can with what you have.

In each of Kate’s rehearsals, her respect for the choristers was obvious. She addressed them as “ladies and gentlemen,” no matter how young the choir; she used rehearsal time effectively and efficiently; she took ownership of any mistakes she made; and she established a consistently positive learning climate through her patience, warm smiles, and encouragement.

**Core values: Summary.** Central to Kate’s work as a choral music educator is the high value she places upon community and respect. These values inform the ways in which she enacts her professional knowledge in each of her choir contexts. As a child, Kate was drawn to the church choir, not only for the musical outlet it provided, but more importantly, because she loved the sense of community she felt as part of that ensemble. Through Kate’s work with her choirs, she strives to build a sense of community within her ensembles, and she finds opportunities for ensembles to contribute to the community
at large. Perhaps a result of Kate’s reflexivity, and perhaps in part because it was lacking from her early experiences as a musician, Kate brings a level of respect to her relationships with her ensembles. Kate has tremendous respect for the contributions the Sisters of Mercy made to music education in Newfoundland and Labrador, including her own start in music. She carries that same sense of reverence and awe into her choral ensembles, where she respects every individual who sings in her groups and never takes for granted their commitment to making music with her.

Chapter Summary

Part I of this chapter presented highlights of Kate’s life story, based on stories of experience Kate shared with me in our interviews, establishing the context for this study. Part II addressed the research questions of this study, exploring the facets of Kate’s professional knowledge that were revealed through our interviews and contextualized through observations of her choir rehearsals. Informed by experiences across her life span, Kate’s knowledge of self, knowledge of her teaching role, knowledge of music, and her core values of community and respect guide her practice in each of her teaching contexts.
Chapter Five

This chapter explores the life stories and professional knowledge of Katherine, and the format follows the structure that was established in chapter four. The prelude explains my relationship to Katherine prior to beginning this research and describes the settings in which I interviewed and observed her for this study. Part I presents a chronicle of Katherine's life story. While all words attributed to Katherine are her own, I have reconstructed many of her stories from multiple interview transcripts. Part II responds directly to the research questions guiding this study. It presents Katherine’s professional knowledge, organized thematically, as revealed to me through her own telling of her life story. Throughout this chapter, the words of Katherine appear in italics.

Prelude

My Relationship to Katherine

I knew who Katherine was several years before I ever met her. She was one of the first—perhaps the first—female high school instrumental conductors I had ever seen. The first time I saw her was at the St. John’s Arts and Culture Centre, during the Kiwanis Music Festival. I saw Katherine conduct her high school string orchestra, and I was completely captivated by her elegance, her height, and the way she looked as if she was playing her violin, with neither a bow nor an instrument in her hands. I could see the music in her body, and she challenged all pre-conceived notions I held about what it meant to be a conductor. Katherine brought an artistry to the podium I had never seen before. I was probably in grade seven at the time. I had been playing in my school band for over two years, and from the very moment I had picked up my trumpet, I had known I wanted to be a music teacher. But when I saw Katherine on stage, I knew I wanted to be a
conductor. Later that evening, I saw Katherine in the lobby, leaving with another music teacher. They were both wearing fur coats, and I felt as if I was watching movie stars walk by me. I was in awe. While the fur coats were impressive, it was what I had seen and heard on the stage earlier that evening that made me feel as if I was watching a celebrity leave the building with her best friend. I felt like I was witnessing a rare personal moment of this glamorous woman’s life. I felt like I should ask for her autograph.

I would meet Katherine three or four years later. I had my first summer job as an assistant at a summer music camp where Katherine was the strings teacher. I cannot recall all the details, but I remember writing out string parts for “Sheep May Safely Graze” from her conductor’s score. Tackling the viola part, it was the first time I had ever drawn an alto clef. I took great pride in the transcription work, as I wanted to impress Katherine more than anything. She appreciated my attention to detail and was most thankful for my work. I was extremely shy at that time and never took the opportunity to engage in conversation with her. At the very least, I hoped she knew my name, but I couldn’t be sure. Eventually, our paths would cross on a more regular basis. Once I graduated from high school, I became more active in the St. John’s music community, which is small enough that eventually everyone knows everyone, even if on a very superficial level. When I approached Katherine to participate in my study, she did not even hesitate to sign on. It seemed that it was not my topic that interested in her as much as being interested in supporting my work. On many occasions, I have seen Katherine support her former students by offering them opportunities as soloists, composers, and
conductors. I felt very fortunate that this sense of generosity was being extended to me, someone who had never been her student.

**Setting the Research Stage**

Katherine and I met for interviews three times over a period of eight months. The first interview took place in Katherine’s living room, sitting on her couch, with her dog nestled between the two of us. The second interview took place in her school’s staff room. As it was a professional development day for teachers, the room was empty and provided a quiet space to chat. The third took place in the choral room at Katherine’s school, during the exam period, so we were not interrupted by students at any point.

Throughout the research process, I had the opportunity to observe Katherine work with her adult chamber choir, and I saw her conduct performances with three of her choirs—the adult chamber choir and her school concert and chamber choirs. The rehearsals were held in the choral room at Blessed Sacrament high school, a large space full of history, the front wall plastered with at least thirty years of choir photos and awards. It is also the room in which Katherine, Kate, and Callie each attended their high school music classes; the room in which Kate completed her music teaching internship; the room in which Katherine currently teaches all of her music classes and holds all of her rehearsals. The performances took place in the main recital hall at the Memorial University School of Music, in the auditorium at Blessed Sacrament, and in the main theatre at the St. John’s Arts and Culture Centre. While I attended each rehearsal and performance with the eyes and ears of a researcher, there was the comfort of feeling at home in each space, as they were all spaces I knew very well, both as an audience member and as a performer.
Part I: Katherine’s Story

Early Life

Katherine’s musical life began at Sacred Heart, an all-girls Catholic school in St. John’s, where she was a student with a group of girls with whom she would spend the next twelve years of her life. Some of those girls would become lifelong friends. Like many of the Catholic schools in St. John’s at the time, Sacred Heart offered private music instruction during the school day to a number of girls who were seen as being particularly talented in music.

I had an unbelievably enriched education in music through the nuns. They kind of picked me out. I remember I was in “Little Heart” [the nickname for the primary school] and some nun came to me and said, “Excuse me, come here. You’re going to be going over to “Big Heart” [the nickname for the elementary school] for music lessons.” I remember it was myself and [three other girls]. We were “the chosen ones.” So we’d go over to Big Heart once or twice a week for piano lessons. I started off on piano in grade two, and then in grade three I also started violin.

From the age of seven, Katherine worked hard to develop her musicianship both inside and outside of the school context. While her experiences were not always enjoyable, she grew as a musician alongside a number of talented girls, and their common experiences united them together.

Every Saturday morning of my life, we did music theory—an hour or two of music theory. We’d go in, and we had classroom theory. That started when I was seven, so I didn’t know that was not the way people really spent their Saturdays. I guess where we were kind of the chosen ones or whatever, [there were] pretty high expectations. Even though I was not taught violin really well, and I wasn’t taught piano really well, we still managed to do well. I think we were just among very talented people, so [we] just survived—even though my piano lessons with Sister...
Una were kind of scary. There was nothing nurturing about them. Sister Una was a scary, scary person. She really loved me, and she left stuff for me in her will, but she was really frightening with a lot of kids. She was really scary. But thank god she liked me. And the violin: when I was in grade six, she sent me off to Patricia Osmond, so then I was getting some really good lessons, but they also encouraged us to go away every summer. So every summer, we’d go away to music camp, and we’d come back and we’d have learned so much.

While music clearly played a significant role in Katherine’s childhood, it did not consume all of her time outside of school. Katherine was very much involved in athletic activities as well. Every week, after theory classes, Katherine would go skating, “I’d go from there to the Stadium, because my dad was a referee, so that was what my Saturdays were—they were theory and then straight down skating.” Katherine describes her childhood life outside of music:

Sports—basketball and volleyball, and skating and swimming and tennis and baseball. I loved sports, and I was pretty good at them too. So just a bit of everything, and back then it wasn’t the organized sports [like today]: [(aside, with sarcasm) Oh my god, you’re six, and you’re not in all-star soccer?] We just did everything. So I was a well-rounded athlete. I was athlete of the year at Sacred Heart [Elementary School] when I graduated from there.

Katherine grew up with two brothers, one a year older and one a year younger, and in a neighbourhood with a lot of boys. Katherine would often play on the boys’ teams and would always be the first girl picked. While Katherine attended an all-girls school and has maintained friendships with some of her K-11\(^4\) classmates, she continues to know the boys from her brothers’ classes as well.

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\(^4\) At that time, there was no grade 12 in Newfoundland.
I went to Sacred Heart, which was an all-girls school, but my brothers went to St. Aidan's, next door, so it wasn’t only that I knew my two brothers, but when your brothers go to St. Aidan’s, you know every guy in their class—because they were all so close at St. Aidan’s, and they still are. So everybody that was in my brothers’ classes, I still know all of them, and it’s just like time hasn’t passed. It’s a really strange bond.

Katherine’s father has played a significant role throughout her entire life, and his place in her life was well-established in her childhood.

[Dad]’s a proud St. Aidan’s man. He’s a real servant, and he’s really smart, and I always believe everything he says, and he’s a really good athlete. Yeah—he was incredible with us as kids. He was just an amazing father. We did all kinds of things together, and he was our leader, but you know, he did really fun things with us. I’m very lucky.

High School

Grade nine marked a significant point in Katherine’s life. That year, Katherine began her schooling at Blessed Sacrament, and at the same time, piano lessons with Sister Ellen. While she continued with Saturday morning theory classes, Katherine also started to take small group theory lessons from Sister Ellen. It was at this point that Katherine’s love of theory was born.

I got to know theory so well. It was my baby—that’s my favourite thing to do, music theory. I could just sit down and just do it just for a pastime, just for fun! And Sister Ellen, more so than anyone, made me realize how important it was.

Sister Ellen would become an influential figure for the remainder of Katherine’s schooling and well into her professional career. To this day, Sister Ellen plays an important role in Katherine’s professional life.
My life took a complete and total change in high school. The first day in music class at Blessed Sacrament, I didn’t know Sister Ellen, but there was a group of us that had a really great background in music, and there were some others from other schools that probably didn’t have as strong a background. And so we went into the music class, and Sister Ellen was talking about the violin or something and asked how many strings it had. And it was either me or Anna Byrne—I can’t remember—who said “five,” just kidding around. Well, she took myself and [three others]—all these people who right now have fantastic careers—we were all sitting together. We were the know-it-alls. She took us aside—she didn’t do it in front of the whole class—and she said, “Do you know that there’s more knowledge about music in my pinky than in your entire body? There’s more knowledge in my pinky.” And that put us in our place. And for some reason, she had the right aura, and you believed her, and you knew it, and that was it. She had us. We loved her from then on, and we never messed with her. So that was it. We still remind her of that. “There’s more knowledge in my pinky . . .” She brought us down to size so quick.

And then I had the fortune of spending three years as a private piano student with that woman. She taught me so much. She taught me more than I’d ever learned, and she taught us that you know your stuff, you learn your stuff, and there’s no excuse really for not knowing your stuff. And if a person doesn’t know their stuff, she’ll, she’ll . . . she won’t tell them, but she’ll kind of silently kind of disregard the musician—they have to know their stuff. And don’t pretend that you know it. If you don’t know it, and you’re willing to admit it, fine. But don’t go pretending that you know stuff when you don’t know it, and she, she knew how to put us . . . So I think I have a pretty good check on what I know and the enormous amount of stuff that I don’t know because that’s right in front of my face—what I don’t know. And I think that that’s where—that’s why I am where I am. There was an atmosphere of teamwork, of honesty, and there was hardly any “b.s.” You were never any better than anyone else. You gave one hundred per cent all the time—all the time—not just for performance, so that your performances were
always just a natural extension of the process. We never had extra rehearsals before a performance because every rehearsal we had was meaningful.

The foundation of Katherine’s love of choral singing was laid in high school, while still maintaining her commitment and passion for the violin.

Violin is my first love, and then I kind of ended up accidentally doing choirs. It was just a complete love of choral music from my high school teacher, which was Sister Ellen. Because she could turn anybody on, and what she did was she turned on the finest of musicians who normally wouldn’t really think singing in a choir was anything all that important. She made us deserving and choirs deserving of us, and that doesn’t often happen in the world. [Ordinarily.] I would have been bored in a choir, but Sister Ellen made it so thrilling to us. She made everything—it just seemed so alive.

Katherine not only learned from Sister Ellen tremendous lessons in music theory and in choral singing, but in life as well. Sister Ellen’s pride as a Newfoundlander had a significant impact on Katherine.

She taught us well, and I did learn a lot from her. She just made things really easy for us, and she’s a very, very, very passionate, proud Newfoundlander. When we were in high school, we went away to sing in a national competition and when we were going, I remember we were thinking, “Oh my god, we’re not going to be good enough,” and Sister Ellen laced into us, and said, “Don’t you be so foolish. You’re going to be better than anything there.” Now, not that we needed to—you know—because as soon as we started thinking we were better she would haul us down to the ground, but you know, we were of the same mentality as all Newfoundlanders back then. We all thought we weren’t good enough, and by god, she was like, “Listen here, this is—this music is being performed as well as it could be anywhere in the world, and you perform this music—it could not be performed any better and, and that’s it.”
Undergraduate Education

Katherine’s experiences with music in her elementary and high school years set her up well for an undergraduate degree in music. In fact, they may have set her up a little too well, as Katherine did not find her undergraduate schooling to be very stimulating. She enjoyed the social aspect of university, and over the course of four years, she became a better violinist. However, nothing could compare to the education she had received from Sister Ellen.

I skipped first year and second year theory at MUN [Memorial University of Newfoundland] . . . I spent one week in first year theory, and then they kicked me out and put me in second year. And then I spent another couple of weeks in second year, and then they said, “Take the first term off.” So I did the second term of second year theory, which still meant nothing to me. I learned something in form and analysis—that was good—I actually learned in that course. And I became a better violinist at university, obviously. That was more from when I went to Guildhall because I was really challenged. I went on an external semester to the Guildhall School of Music in London. They had that at the time, which saved me.

I really didn’t learn a lot in my undergraduate [degree], but it was fun. I partied a lot and grew up a little bit, and had two of the best years of my life, getting to know myself because I had [previously] been in long-term relationships. So my undergraduate degree really had more of a purpose of [getting] to know myself. I became a better violinist. I learned some form and analysis and stuff, and I grew up a little bit.

While Katherine insists that she did not learn a great deal through her undergraduate education, it was during this time that she undertook the formal education she needed in order to become a school music teacher—not that Katherine’s original intentions had been to pursue a music education degree.
I didn’t know [if I wanted to become a school music teacher]. Dr. King [the Director of the School of Music] never gave us a choice. He had us all in music education. When you ask about it now, I never had a choice. He was like, “Listen here—you, you, you, and you—you’re all doing the conjoint degrees [Bachelor of Music and Bachelor of Music Education]. So we never had a choice. If I had been given the choice, I probably wouldn’t have done music education because I was still an instrumental snob. And if they had given myself, Lori, Margaret, or any of us the choice, we would have chosen to not do music education. Because we thought we were “la-ti-dah.”

Graduate School

Upon finishing her undergraduate degrees, Katherine established herself as a school music teacher in St. John’s. Seven or eight years later, she began her master’s degree in conducting in the United States, an experience that was completely worthwhile for her: “I really learned a lot—because you get out of the master’s what you put into it, and I did the degree that I wanted to do.” It was an intense summer program with opportunities to study both instrumental and choral conducting, and Katherine was “in [her] total glee.”

It’s funny because I first started doing my master’s thesis on something about English madrigals. I did research for about a year, and I just woke up one morning and I said, “What am I doing? Burn it!” And I was always fascinated by choral intonation. Why not, if I’m going to write a paper, why not be on that? So that was fabulous, the research that I did; and everything that I found out, it all made sense. It was just like taking a puzzle and going, “bang, bang, bang” [putting all the pieces together].

Katherine’s graduate school experience was a powerful one, not only because she was able to find answers to the questions about choral intonation that had been puzzling her for so long, but also because it equipped her to be a better teacher for her students.
I always took my violin—a lot of times, took my violin to rehearsals, and knew that the Pythagorean tuning on the violin was different than the way the choir tuned, and I thought I was playing the violin out of tune. So I changed my topic on my master’s paper because I needed to solve this conflict that I had with myself with tuning.

So, taking that long amount of time that I did to really research tuning and that—it made all these things so—it got—all those solutions are so simple and obvious when you take the time to really go through all the information, and so now, I—I’m equipped to make my kids understand this stuff, and it’s so simple and so obvious to them.

Professional Career

Katherine has been teaching music in St. John’s schools for the past 23 years, most of which have been spent at her current school, Blessed Sacrament, where she has the rare fortune of teaching high school music full-time. Having spent her first year teaching in a St. John’s elementary school, Katherine moved onto teaching choral music and strings at her current school on a half-time basis, alongside teaching strings at her own feeder school half-time. She balanced responsibilities at both schools for five years, after which she secured a full-time position at the high school, where she continues to lead a substantial choral music program.

When Katherine began her career as a school music teacher, she carried with her a reputation as a violinist. However, because of her own experiences as a high school student, she knew what she wanted as a choral music teacher:

Thank god I knew what I wanted—I knew what I wanted because I wanted what I had with Sister Ellen, so even though the girls were really good, I had a lot to offer them. I didn’t realize that at the time, but I do realize it now, and even those girls still come up to me now. It was a great time I had with them.
While she drew on her own experiences as a choral musician, Katherine was also open to learning from her students:

*I learned because I had such good people in my choirs. When I started off, I had [extremely talented] girls in my choir, and so I had the opportunity to learn from them.*

When Katherine started teaching at Blessed Sacrament, it was an all-girls school. Shortly after, it transitioned to a co-ed school. This process involved streaming a grade level of boys in one year at a time, beginning with the grade 10s. Once there were boys in grades 10 through 12, Katherine knew it was time for her choir to transition as well.

Attracting the boys to the firmly established all-girls choral program required team-work:

*When [the boys] were fed through to grade 12, I got the girls together, and it was a great bunch of girls, and I said “Girls, I’m finished here now—I have to have boys in the choir. The world is measuring me now, and I have to measure up.” And so I said, “Girls, the only thing—the only rule is that you go, you bring boys back into this room; you bring boys that you want to spend time with.” For some reason that was instinctive. I have all brothers, and so I said, “Just bring boys in here who you want to spend time with,” and they came back with the hockey team, and not just one or two members, but the whole hockey team, and that’s what—that’s what I had to face.*

Since those early days, Katherine has built a substantial music program at her high school. She currently has four choirs—a concert choir, which is non-auditioned and open to anyone; a chamber choir, an auditioned subset of the concert choir; a girls’ choir, which helps many of the younger girls develop the skills they need to make the chamber choir; and a madrigal choir, which is designed for the enrichment of about 12-16 of the more advanced students. While not a regular ensemble, the boys will work on a few TTBB pieces on their own over the course of the year. The choirs are all offered on an
extra-curricular basis, while Katherine’s regular curricular responsibilities include teaching Advanced Placement Theory, the music component of the International Baccalaureate program, Applied Music (for instrumentalists), and Experiencing Music (open to any student, regardless of musical background). While most high school music teachers in St. John’s teach at least one other subject as well as music, Katherine has a teaching load that consists only of music courses. While she feels fortunate to be in such a position, it also brings its challenges:

*I’ll tell you one of the biggest problems with me is that I’m teaching a full teaching load, and I’m trying to run an extra-curricular choral program that has to be done right. I’ve got no interest in having a choir that [operates like] “Okay, you’re going to sing at the retirement home this date, so now you’re going to learn ‘Bridge Over Troubled Water.’” I have no desire. This is a system; it’s a program. And so to run that program and have a full teaching load on the side, it’s really demanding.*

Aside from her school teaching responsibilities, Katherine directs an auditioned amateur adult chamber choir, which grew out of a desire amongst Blessed Sacrament alumni to keep singing together; she also regularly contributes to community musicals as choral director; and she teaches violin privately. Katherine has had incredible success as a choral music educator, and there is no indication that it will end anytime soon. But Katherine is reluctant to take credit for her own achievements. Instead, she attributes much of it to the wonderful foundation that was given to her by Sister Ellen. The sense of inevitability that this is the way things were meant to be for her is evident in her talk of luck, being blessed, and God knowing “the path.”

*I was just lucky. She made everything I do so easy. That importance that theory had in my life—along with this really good training and this complete love of choirs in high school—kind of all made the path happen, and God knew that. The
path was very obvious to Him. It just wasn’t to me. But it all makes sense, and looking back on it now, everything makes perfect sense as to why I’m doing choirs, and why I love the violin. And I—I’m blessed. I’m the luckiest person in the world.

Looking to the Future

Katherine eventually plans to retire from school teaching; however, her plans do not include retiring from choral music education. Katherine would like to spend more time adjudicating and writing, picking up where her master’s paper left off:

I’m going to retire [at some point], from high school. [And] right now, I’m doing—I can only accept one adjudicating gig a year because the school board won’t give me the time off, and it’s not fair to the kids. What I’ll do in [when I retire]—I’m going to start writing again because I need to continue on with my master’s paper. I’ll probably lead a more balanced life because I’ll be able to do the things—the guest conducting and the adjudicating. I’ll be able to do all the things that I have to say no to now, and I’ll just say yes to all of them—or to a lot of them. And I’ll continue with [my adult chamber choir] in this town, but that will be—it will allow me—I really want to do a lot more guest conducting. So I’ll have a really full life, and I’ll be doing a lot of travel and that. All of the things that are making me insane now, [I’ll be able to] do it in a sane way because it’s just hard to do all those things, and still be a mother and a high school teacher, full-time.

Further, Katherine’s husband works in Alberta for most of the year, and retirement from school teaching will allow her to spend more time there. Over the past two years, Katherine has been an adjudicator at festivals in Alberta, so she would like to continue to explore those professional opportunities as well.
Part II: Katherine’s Professional Knowledge

My first research question asks what constitutes the professional knowledge of each of the choral music educators in this study. In this section, I describe what I consider to be the main components of Katherine’s professional knowledge, which were revealed through my analysis of the transcripts of our interviews and my observation notes of Katherine’s rehearsals. I have identified five main facets of Katherine’s professional knowledge: her knowledge of self, her knowledge of music, her knowledge of choral singers, her knowledge of the choral milieu, and a commitment to a set of values that guides her practice.

My second research question asks how the professional knowledge of the choral music educators in this study has been shaped by their life experiences. Through this section, I describe how Katherine’s professional knowledge is manifested in her practice, as well as significant interactions with people and events that have informed each of the five facets of professional knowledge.

My third research question asks how the participants’ experiences of developing as choral music educators within the specific social, cultural, and political contexts of Newfoundland and Labrador have shaped their professional knowledge. This question will be addressed in the “Knowledge of Self” section of this chapter and will be discussed further in chapter seven.

Knowledge of Self

Katherine’s strong sense of self is evident in the ease with which she expresses who she is as an instrumentalist, a mother, a Newfoundlander, and a lifelong learner, identities that inform her overall teaching practice. The importance of self-knowledge to
Katherine is illustrated through what she believes is required to be an effective teacher: she believes it is essential to be honest with yourself, to acknowledge what you don’t know, and to have excitement towards learning what it is you don’t know.

**An instrumentalist.** While Katherine does most of her professional work with choirs, her first love is the violin. Her passion for the violin is deeply rooted and is ever-present in her life. Katherine’s identity as an instrumentalist has always come first, even when she was singing in her high school choir. This identity is evident even when she is on the podium with her choirs today.

*We were a good group of musicians, and we were instrumentalists first, and always will be, and I probably still—I still am an instrumentalist first. Violin is my first love, and then I kind of ended up accidentally doing choirs. The violin is so incredibly personal to me. I play the violin, and I’m off on an oasis, and I’m just there. I’m gone with it because you can just make so much happen with every phrase, and that’s what I try and do with the choir. I try and play my violin with them, and there’s no doubt about that. And even a lot of my conducting gestures reflect playing the violin, and I’m so incredibly comfortable with that, and I know what I can achieve on violin, and I know what I can achieve with a choir, and the two just completely marry each other. I’m a choral musician and I know a lot about choirs. I’m a choral director and a choral musician I guess, but I’m an instrumentalist first and foremost.*

As researcher, I recognized the subjectivity I was bringing to the research interviews when I found myself surprised by Katherine’s strong assertion of her instrumentalist identity. While I had always known Katherine as a conductor of both string orchestras and choirs, I would always have considered her a choral musician first and foremost, without having given any thought to what her primary instrument had been. When I think about this further, not even my own experience of being known as a
choral singer in Toronto, while being grounded in my own sense of identity as a “band person” led me to wonder about how Katherine might position herself as an instrumental and a choral musician.

I saw Katherine draw upon her knowledge as an instrumentalist in the gestures she uses to communicate her ideas about articulations and vibrato. Her intimate knowledge of the violin enables her to embody stylistic characteristics of music, enhancing the sense of musical leadership she provides from the podium and providing particular clarity to the strings players who sing in her choirs. Further, Katherine’s experiences as an instrumentalist who has had tremendous success and satisfaction with choirs contributes to her belief that instrumentalists make excellent choral singers. I will take up this idea later in a discussion of Katherine’s knowledge of the choral milieu.

A mother. Katherine’s experience of being a mother has allowed Katherine to step back from what can be an all-encompassing profession, lending balance and perspective to her life. Further, being a mother has enabled her to approach choral music with a greater depth of emotion than she had before becoming a mother. This is an integral part of creating a choral experience that is both spiritual and transformative, as will be discussed later. When Katherine shared her thoughts on being a mother, there was a noticeable shift in her energy, and she seemed encased in a complete sense of calm.

All of a sudden I had one career, and then Vanessa came and I had two careers. Well Vanessa comes first, and the career comes second. No matter what ups and downs your career has taken, I don’t know how to explain that—it’s not really ups and downs, but the pressures of your career: you can’t let them affect [you]. So in a way, it’s very healthy if you can separate the two because it keeps you grounded, it keeps you not stressed. It’s been a real blessing to have both of those things happening at the same time in my life.
While being a mother has added balance to Katherine’s life and enabled her to keep her career in perspective, it has also informed decisions about repertoire and musical interpretation. This relates directly to the depth and range of emotions she has experienced as a parent.

When Vanessa was a young child, I couldn’t get through some music because of her—because you just have such an enormous palette of emotions when you have a child, and then that definitely, you make that switch into your music, and you can become way more emotional about your music. Sometimes to the point, like I’m sure when people have someone close to them that dies, it can be very difficult to conduct some pieces of music. That kind of emotion, if you didn’t have a child, that kind of extreme emotion, you can experience in the run of a day with a kid. Because when you see that your child is hurt about something, it’s amazing how much you hurt for them. I hurt way more for her than she does for herself. But that’s it. If you choose to be a parent, then you choose to experience all that wonderful, blissful joy and all the sorrow.

Katherine believes that her experiences as a mother have directly informed her emotional connection to choral music. She is also confident that becoming a mother gave her a sense of perspective that has enabled her to embrace a full and hectic professional life without over-extending herself or burning out. While I had no way to directly evaluate this change in emotions and perspective, it was interesting for me to see Katherine’s daughter sing in the adult chamber choir. Katherine said that it is very rewarding for her to have Vanessa singing in the choir, as she had grown up surrounded by members of the choir, many who had been her babysitters when she was a young child. Seeing her own passion for choral music reflected in her daughter’s engagement with the chamber choir is both personally and professionally satisfying.
A proud Newfoundlander. As she travels frequently outside of the province, adjudicating across the country, and attending international festivals with her adult chamber choir, being a Newfoundlander is a significant aspect of Katherine’s professional identity. On those stages, Katherine presents herself not only as a choral musician, but more than anything, as a proud Newfoundlander. Identifying as a Newfoundlander is often not just about being born and raised in Newfoundland—it is about carrying a sense of pride in the accomplishments of the province as a whole. As a high school student, Katherine learned not to think less of her potential because she was from Newfoundland, an attitude often carried by Newfoundlanders, even today.

Historically, Newfoundland has experienced economic and social hardship, and this has played into the identities of many Newfoundlanders (Delisle, 2008; McDonald, 2011). Through Sister Ellen, Katherine learned that Newfoundlanders have as much to offer as anyone from beyond the island. One line from Sister Ellen resonates with her in particular: “And wherever you go in life, please do not forget where you came from.” Katherine honours these words every time she travels with her adult chamber choir, which has travelled internationally for a number of competitions.

[Every] time we go away and compete, first and foremost on the choir’s mind and on my mind is that we make Newfoundland proud. Everything that we can do to promote this amazing place—and it’s not to make Canada proud. You can ask any Newfoundlander: we’re not proud Canadians, we’re proud Newfoundlanders. I really feel a duty to this phenomenal place that gave me so much. I would feel I had let my province down if I didn’t do my best job. At every opportunity I can, on the world stage, every opportunity to make sure that they know where we’re from. When I take the choir away, there’s never this, ‘Oh, we’re [only] from Newfoundland,’ so I really am a reflection of that woman in so many ways: “Be a proud Newfoundlander, and realize you are on top of the world when it comes to
music, and go show people.” And I’m excited that this place has become one of the leaders in choral music in the country. I’m just a really proud Newfoundlander.

Katherine’s identity as a Newfoundlander informs her professional knowledge in that it establishes an extra-musical purpose when adjudicating and performing outside of Newfoundland. I can relate to this sense of purpose on a personal level. Since I first began traveling as a teenager, I have learned the importance of stressing the “s” that comes at the end of St. John’s when telling people where I am from (so as not to confuse it with Saint John, New Brunswick). Frequently, when talking to Canadians not from Newfoundland, my “St. John’s” will be followed by their, “Is that New Brunswick or Newfoundland?” Part of traveling as a Newfoundlander—or living “away”—is always about educating people about where Newfoundland is. During my first teaching position in Calgary, Alberta, I recall taking advantage of the inclusion of the Newfoundland folksong, “Lukey’s Boat,” in the grade three Musicanada textbook. I used the song to teach my students about my home province and about one of the most popular bands from Newfoundland, Great Big Sea, who recorded the song on one of their albums. It was also in Calgary that I educated my landlord about the geographic location of the Bay of Fundy, though it took actual maps and not just my word to convince him that it was not part of Newfoundland’s waters. As Newfoundland educators and musicians, there is often a sense of incredible opportunity to educate people about our home province when we are faced with groups of people as an audience. Because people often do not know exactly where Newfoundland is, the education piece is more powerful when it is accompanied by a sense of pride, one that gives people a reason to believe it is important that they learn something about the province.
A lifelong learner. Katherine believes that in order to be an effective teacher you need to know what you don’t know and be excited about what you don’t know. This is evident in her own pursuit of a graduate degree and her desire to continue learning and writing upon retirement from school teaching. Katherine found her master’s research paper to be valuable as it was grounded in her personal experience of finding answers to her questions about intonation.

My master’s—I really learned a lot. Because you get out of the master’s what you put into it, and I did the degree that I wanted to do. I had—I spent a lot of summers doing Suzuki training and doing extra violin stuff and, you know, pursuing a career as a solo violinist and that, and it took a while before I realized, “Now I’m going to do choral conducting.” I did instrumental and choral conducting, and my master’s thesis was the best thing I ever did because it—it empowered me so much to understand tuning systems, so that, and, and it solved, it answered all these questions that I had, personally, about tuning, that came up naturally. But it’s a true honest paper because it comes from my own life experience. And, every single line that’s in it is there because I had experienced it.

While it has been many years since Katherine completed her master’s degree, and her retirement years are just ahead of her, she is ready to reignite the passion that was fuelled by her master’s paper and continue exploring the complexities surrounding intonation.

[In] five years, I’m going to start writing again, because I am going to write “My Two Cents” or something like that because I need to continue on with my master’s paper. But a master’s paper is not—you’re not really supposed to discover new information. They made me stop it when I was just grasping—like it was really good, and my advisor said, “Katherine, you have to stop right now or you will be writing this for the rest of your life.” So I stopped it when it was still a
practical guide for teachers at university and high school level teachers, but there’s so much more that I wanted to write about.

During our first interview together, Katherine wanted me to ask her very specific questions so she could respond with direct answers, as opposed to talking in a more self-directed way about the things that were important to her. However, by our third interview, Katherine was able to express how the process of sharing her stories with me had served as professional development for her.

It helps me sometimes when I sit down and talk because I really don’t think about those things. And someday when I retire and I can think about them more, maybe I’ll write something, you know. I’ve learned more about myself listening to you—it’s been a nice experience for me. I’m glad I did this. You know what, even talking myself, when you ask the questions—it solidifies some things, that, you know, because you just kind of go fast-forward through this whole teaching career, and things work, but you don’t give any thought as to why they work. Sometimes it’s nice to analyse, you know.

Katherine’s sense of professional responsibility towards lifelong learning has been directly influenced by Sister Ellen, who always encouraged her to be honest about the things that she knows and doesn’t know, and to pursue the things she doesn’t know with a sense of passion. Katherine has taken Sister Ellen’s words to heart, and as a result, not only has she established habits of mind that have enabled her to continue to develop her knowledge as a teacher over the course of her career, but her students have been beneficiaries as well. For example, Katherine’s master’s research enabled her to understand tuning systems, and consequently, she is a more effective teacher, and her students have a well-developed understanding of tuning. In a subsequent section, I will discuss the specific relationship between this aspect of her professional knowledge and the success of Katherine’s choirs.
**Knowledge of self: Summary.** Katherine’s knowledge of herself as an instrumentalist, a mother, a Newfoundlander, and a lifelong learner informs her professional knowledge in a variety of ways. Her knowledge as an instrumentalist has provided her with a set of conducting gestures that enhance her communication of musical style, and it has shaped her belief that instrumentalists make excellent choral musicians. Her experiences as a mother have led her to approach choral music with a broader range of emotions than before she became a mother, and they have given her a sense of perspective that prevents her from professional burnout. Her identity as a Newfoundlander has given her a sense of extra-musical purpose when she travels as an adjudicator and as a conductor. She takes advantage of the time she spends with audiences to educate them about the geographical location and accomplishments of her home province. Her commitment to lifelong learning has allowed her to improve her practice at all stages of her career and gives her a sense of direction for when she retires from school teaching—the learning journey never ends. Sister Ellen has played a role in developing Katherine’s sense of pride as a Newfoundlander and her sense of responsibility as a lifelong learner. In the following sections, it will become even more clear the extent of Sister Ellen’s influence on the development of Katherine’s professional knowledge.

**Knowledge of Music**

All music teachers carry with them a wide array of knowledge about music. However, that which comprises the discipline of music is so vast that not every music teacher can be assumed to have the same musical strengths or to emphasize the same aspects of music in their teaching. For Katherine, the most important components of her
musical knowledge appear to be her understanding of chords, intonation, and musical works.

**Understanding the relationship between chords and intonation.** For Katherine, understanding chords is the key to being able to sing choral music well. Once singers understand basic theory well enough to know where the notes they are singing fit into the harmonic structure of the chord, she believes they will intuitively know how to balance that note—whether to sing it out or pull it back, to sing it a little sharp or a little flat. Katherine teaches her musicians balance and intonation by teaching them theory. That is one of the primary reasons that Katherine believes she can teach anyone to sing well in a choir.

*I try to teach them, as soon as possible, a lot of theory. They need to understand that the third of the chord has to be sung quietly, unless it’s in the highest voice, but that’s another issue. But I’m really clear on tuning issues and on balance and blend, and so that’s the kind of thing I have to get across to them. So, constantly and constantly trying to educate them so that they’ll know their music theory. I expect people to look at chords and expect them to see them as fast as I do, and that’s my only wish—that the world would see them as fast as I do, and my choir would see them as fast as I do, because I lose my patience sometimes.*

During a rehearsal with the adult chamber choir, it was evident that Katherine expected the choristers to have a strong working knowledge of chords and understand their relationship to intonation. At the very least, she expected them to be able to fix the tuning of a note when she provided them with a theoretical explanation of why it was out of tune. As they rehearsed an arrangement of “The Holly and the Ivy,” Katherine addressed the sopranos:
Sopranos—your E is flat. Look at that chord. It’s the third of the chord and when it’s in the highest voice, you have to sing it higher. I don’t know why that is, but I’ve read that, and I have to figure it out. Usually you lower the third, but when it’s in the upper voice, you have to sing it almost at equal temperament. (Field notes; November 25, 2007)

Katherine noted that she sometimes loses her patience when her choirs do not recognize chords as quickly as she does. I did notice this in a rehearsal of the adult chamber choir. As they rehearsed the “Credo” from Schubert’s Mass No. 6 in Eb, Katherine appeared to be frustrated as she said, “You’re not letting me know you’re hearing the chords in advance. You’re hitting the chords and cleverly fixing them—hear them in advance” (Field notes; October 14, 2007).

Through a strong foundation in understanding harmonic structures, Katherine’s obsession with tuning began. Through her master’s thesis, she came to an understanding of intonation that unlocked the door to teaching her choirs to sound better than they ever had before. To make the process as efficient as possible, along with theory, Katherine teaches her students how to listen for intonation right from the start.

The first thing I do is teach tuning—and ear-training—my warm-ups are all ear-training. I’m just old and wise now, and I know what I’m doing. I work on tuning right from the very first rehearsal, and that’s everything. If you sing in tune, you don’t have to put the effort in.

It was interesting to see that Katherine continues to focus on ear-training even with her adult chamber choir, most of whom she had taught as high school students. The warm-ups I observed consisted of exercises based on intervals, pitch memory, and octatonic scales.
While many choirs sing repertoire accompanied by the piano, Katherine focuses primarily on a capella repertoire with all of her choirs so that the equal temperament tuning of the piano does not conflict with her approach to choral singing, which is rooted in the system of just intonation.

I attended two performances of Katherine’s high school chamber choir. During one of the performances, they sang two a capella pieces and one piece accompanied by piano. I was struck by the difference in the overall sound of the choir when they sang with the piano. Their tone was not quite as resonant as it was when they sang unaccompanied, and I even noticed that Katherine appeared to have to work harder to enliven the ensemble. Initially, I thought this may have been simply because of the song itself—perhaps they did not know it as well as the other pieces. According to Katherine, that was not the case. She acknowledged that her choirs do not like to sing with the piano because they become so used to singing without the piano very early in their choral development. At one point in a rehearsal of the adult chamber choir, Katherine got up from the piano, having been playing the accompaniment for the Schubert Mass. I noted, “Much more warmth and confidence when Katherine moves away from the piano” (field notes; October 14, 2007). While many choral directors rely on piano accompaniments to help their ensembles with confidence and intonation, in Katherine’s choirs, the piano clearly does the opposite.

Katherine adjudicates choirs at numerous festivals every year, and intonation problems are not uncommon among choirs. According to Katherine, almost always, the solution is quite simple, and it all comes down to really knowing theory.

_You cannot be a good choral director—you can’t be really happening as a choral director unless you have your theory right there_ (gestures to the palm of her
hand], because you need to just be able to look at the chord and say, “Well it’s out of tune, what’s wrong?” Nine times out of ten it’s because the third is being sung too loud, and then the fifth has to be a little tiny bit wider.

Katherine’s strong knowledge of basic theory informs her selection of choral music, and she emphasizes that in order to have a successful choir, conductors must choose quality repertoire. While there are multiple factors that comprise quality repertoire, Katherine maintains that one of the cornerstones is that the part-writing needs to make sense. If the composers and arrangers have not abided by principles of good voice-leading, then the door will be open to problems with intonation and balance in the choir.

A [main] reason why choirs have trouble and don’t succeed is because they pick the wrong rep. You need to pick music that’s well-written. [It needs to follow] your basic old rules of four-part writing.

Katherine fell in love with the study of theory as a child, and her passion for theory has informed her professional knowledge in several ways. Her master’s thesis taught her the explicit relationship between the structure of chords and choral intonation. She passes this knowledge onto her choristers, resulting in a unified understanding of how to achieve balance and sing in tune. Further, she brings this knowledge to her work as a choral adjudicator to help other choral music educators understand how to efficiently address intonation issues. Finally, she uses her knowledge of harmony, part-writing, and voice-leading to select well-written choral repertoire for her ensembles.

Understanding musical works. Katherine very clearly states that she is not a “pieces of music type of teacher.” By this she means she does not teach her choir to sing pieces of music just for the sake of learning particular pieces, and she does not teach a
piece of music without bringing her students to an understanding of the formal structure, history and context of the piece. This approach is directly informed by a breakthrough experience Katherine had as a young performer at a local music festival. Katherine describes herself as the “queen of coming second place” at the Kiwanis Music Festival. Her accomplishment of winning first place finally happened when she had learned a piece “inside out,” beyond the technique of playing the right notes at the right time. This experience left a lasting impression with Katherine, and she endeavours to provide her students with nothing less than a comprehensive understanding of both music history and music theory when studying choral music.

I was the queen of coming second place in the festival because I was always musical enough, but I was really not taught well. When I switched over to Sister Ellen, I did a Dohnányi piece—I can’t remember the name of it now. The way she taught it to me, I understood it, and knew it so incredibly well. I knew it formally, I knew it thematically, and I knew it historically. I knew the work incredibly well, but I didn’t realize that it had become a part of me, and there was nothing unconscious left in the piece, except for [my] own musicality. And I’ve always thought that the reason—and I tell my own private students—the reason why you make mistakes on stage is because the unconscious becomes conscious, and it comes and bites you. You really have to know—you really have to do justice to the piece and to yourself as a musician, and know everything about it that you possibly can. I guess that’s what Sister Ellen had done for me, [and] I knew this piece inside out. I went in [to the festival], and when I went to play it, I don’t know what happened—my legs shook all the way through [the performance], and I think it may have been that I got up, and [thought], “Here I am for the first time in my life, I’m playing a piece that I know incredibly well. I’m not faking it.” I was conscious that my legs were shaking all the way through, [but] I played it flawlessly. I learned a lot from that one experience about how to become a teacher because I experienced that myself, because physically something
happened to me. It's incredible because that piece was not just a piece of music. It was totally a part of me. That's what I like to—that's how I go about doing all my music now, I think.

As the adult chamber choir rehearsed the Schubert *Mass No. 6 in E♭*, Katherine told them, “This is going to be brilliant as long as every single one of you is an expert on this work” (field notes; October 14, 2007). For Katherine, it is never about merely singing the right notes at the right time. It is about knowing as much as you possibly can about a piece of music and internalizing a piece of music so that you can embody the music in your performance.

**Knowledge of music: Summary.** If I were to have approached my data analysis strictly from a content analysis standpoint, I would be devoting many pages to Katherine’s thoughts on music theory. Through each of our interviews, her passion for music theory pervaded. Her love for and knowledge of theory is rooted in childhood. While other children spent Saturday mornings sleeping in and watching cartoons, Katherine went to theory classes. According to Katherine, essential to being a good musician and a good music educator is a solid understanding of music theory. It is the key to balance and intonation in a choir, and if everybody knew theory the same way Katherine does, the process of transforming a piece of repertoire would be much more efficient.

Katherine’s knowledge of music theory and its relationship to choral intonation, as well as her comprehensive understanding of musical works, directly inform her professional knowledge with respect to how to teach music. She knows that teaching theory and ear-training enables her students to learn balance and to solve intonation problems, making the rehearsal process more efficient and the performance product more
refined. Further, she knows that understanding the basic principles of harmony and voice-leading allow her to select quality repertoire for her ensembles. Finally, Katherine knows that by teaching her students the multiple facets of a piece of music—the formal structure, the musical elements, and the historical context—they will develop an embodied understanding of the piece, which will enhance their performance of the piece.

Knowledge of Choral Singers

Katherine’s understanding of the choral experience extends beyond the technical aspects of developing choirs who can sing incredibly in tune. Katherine holds a firm belief that everyone can sing, and that most definitely includes boys and instrumentalists. Among others, Harrison (2007) and Moore (2008) discuss the gendered aspect of choral programs, which see male participation decline through middle and secondary school.

With respect to instrumentalists, Bernhard (2003) and Schleuter (1997) present cases for using singing and vocalization as tools to develop musicianship in band programs, but I encountered difficulty finding any literature that looks specifically at the participation of instrumentalists in choirs. Through Katherine’s experiences teaching the boys’ hockey team and countless instrumentalists how to sing in choirs, she has learned that anyone can sing, “Everyone can sing, you know. And they’ll emanate, too, [the] sound that you want.” In essence, Katherine has learned that virtually anyone can be a learner in a choral context—all it takes is being a human with the ability to use the voice. This broad understanding of who can be a choral singer has enabled Katherine to have highly successful choirs without the issue of finding capable singers ever being a problem.

Even the hockey team can sing. Shortly after Katherine began teaching at Blessed Sacrament, it transitioned from an all-girls school to a co-ed school. This process
entailed streaming one grade level of boys into the school each year over a period of three years, beginning with the grade 10s. During her time teaching at the all-girls school, Katherine felt that her choral success had been attributed to her not having to prepare a mixed SATB choir.

So then when we started feeding in the boys, of course the word in town, everyone was saying, “Oh yeah, she doesn’t have an SATB choir—she’s only got the girls, and that’s why they always get first place.”

Once the boys started to enrol in her school, Katherine knew it was time to prove that her choirs could be successful with boys as well. Initially, she brought in grade 11 and 12 boys from Bishop O’Neill, the adjacent boys’ high school, who wanted to sing, so as not to alienate the grade 10 boys at Blessed Sacrament. She also used the school musical as a way to attract male singers.

For the grade 10 year, I brought up some [additional] boys from [the adjacent boys’ high school], and I started forming something, and then, during the grade 11 year, I think we did “Jesus Christ Superstar,” so that kind of got some boys involved, but we also took boys from [the boys’ school] next door because we needed more, and then in grade 12, we had them all fed through.

Once Katherine had a school full of boys and girls, she knew the choral program at Blessed Sacrament needed to have a mixed choir as its foundation. She called upon the girls in her choir to find boys they wanted to spend time with and bring them to rehearsal. While her plan was successful, she was not completely sure what to do with the boys once they were there. It proved to be an important learning experience for her.

I said, “I don’t know what these guys can sing.” I had them flexing their muscles, teaching them how to breathe, and that taught me a huge lesson because they sounded really good. That very first year, they sounded so good. They won at whatever they went into, and they were so proud of themselves. I remember them...
doing the Janeway telethon, and they were all spiffed up, and they sounded fabulous. It was the entire hockey team, and that taught me, “My god, all of these big strapping jock guys, they should be singing in choirs. They’re big, they’re healthy, they’re athletes, my god, their breath capacity.” And unfortunately so many guys like that just look down on choirs. So that was—so they did that—they brought back the whole hockey team, and besides the entire hockey team, there was probably two or three other guys, who were good musicians, and it was a really good atmosphere. They—this was not an easy practice—they needed a lot of work. I think just knowing what I wanted them to sound like, and thinking, “By god they’re gonna get there,” that was a big turning point in my life because I think I realized then and there that everyone can sing. And they did.

To this day, Katherine has a high rate of male participation in her choirs and often has enough interested male singers to form a boys’ TTBB choir.

**Instrumentalists can sing too!** If you were to ask the members of a wind ensemble how many of them would be comfortable singing in a choir, not all hands would go up. In the world of musicians, there is often quite a divide between singers and instrumentalists (Burwell, 2006). Katherine has learned through her experience of teaching instrumentalists to sing that what is most important is musicianship. With solid musicianship in place, anyone can learn to sing. In Katherine’s current school context, she is fortunate to have a colleague, James, who is an exceptional band director. Many of the band students join Katherine’s choirs and find success. As we discussed teaching instrumentalists to sing, Katherine realized that her best choirs are comprised primarily of strong instrumentalists, with “a sprinkling of singers” to balance out the group.

*A lot of the success [in the choir] is the fact that James and I work really well together, and we have a strong band program, and most of the kids [in the choir] are instrumentalists. And it’s not the choirs that matter in junior high. It’s the bands that matter. That’s where you get your choir people.*
In my own experience, my major instrument is trumpet, yet I have sung in many choirs throughout my life as a musician. Since moving to Toronto seven years ago, I have yet to sing in a choir where it has not been noted as “interesting” or “fascinating” that I sing in a choir even though I was not trained as a “singer.” When I shared this with Katherine, it made her wonder about the composition of choirs throughout Canada, given that her own choirs are primarily comprised of instrumentalists.

My choirs are all instrumentalists, and then you throw in a couple of singers, and it’s a great mix. You put in a couple of colourful singers and a whole bunch of musicians, and you’ve got yourself a great choir. I’ve never even thought of it before. I wonder how that compares with choirs across the country because they’re not only instrumentalists, but they’re really good instrumentalists. I’m probably one of the biggest people for getting instrumentalists in choirs. Everyone can sing, and the instrumentalists are the ones that will be the best choral people if they know their theory.

Katherine’s thoughts have me wondering about the participation of instrumentalists in choirs across the country as well. At Memorial University, all first-year undergraduates are required to sing in the Festival Choir, regardless of their major. While not all of the instrumentalists necessarily enjoy the experience or even come out feeling like they can actually sing, from my own experience, I believe it may change many instrumentalists’ attitudes about singing. During my placement audition for Festival Choir, Professor Andrews asked me if I had considered auditioning for Chamber Choir. I was overwhelmed with excitement, as it had never crossed my mind that I could be good enough for Chamber Choir—I was a trumpet major. I told Professor Andrews that I would consider it, and I ran down the hallway to tell my trumpet teacher what had happened. I did audition and was awarded a spot in the choir, along with many other
instrumentalists. From that moment on, I always had confidence as a choral singer. At Memorial University, it is not unusual to play in the band and sing in the choir. In Newfoundland high schools, students do not have to choose between band and choir. My experiences in Ontario tell me it is not that way everywhere. When I visit local high schools, I notice that music students enrol in either Music-Vocal or Music-Instrumental. During my first year at the University of Toronto, when I saw that I was the only wind player who had signed up for a choir audition, I crossed my name off the list. The following year, when I went ahead with an audition, I was told I did not have a “solo voice.” I would never claim to be a solo singer, but I have no problem making the assertion that I am a good choral musician. Exploring the assumptions related to who gets to be a choral singer and in what contexts goes beyond the scope of this thesis, but Katherine’s question about the participation of instrumentalists in choirs across Canada struck a nerve with me.

**Knowledge of choral singers: Summary.** Katherine’s knowledge that anyone can sing informs her professional knowledge in terms of who is welcome to sing in her choirs. Blessed Sacrament was an all-girls school when Katherine attended as a student and when she began teaching there. When the school became a co-educational institution, she did not have practical experience to draw upon when she first opened the choir up to boys. Working primarily with the hockey team at first, Katherine learned that an important element of good singing was about proper use of breath. Once she discovered how to teach athletes to sing, she was confident that she could teach anyone with a voice to sing. Aside from her strong record of mixed and boys’ choirs, Katherine has had tremendous success engaging instrumentalists as choral singers as well. It was
Katherine’s experience as a high school student in Sister Ellen’s choir that taught her that instrumentalists could—and should—sing. Because Katherine has spent most of her career taking for granted that boys and instrumentalists should sing in choirs, she has been able to maintain a successful choral music program at Blessed Sacrament without ever having to worry that there are not enough singers in the school.

**Knowledge of the Choral Milieu**

Katherine knows that the choral experience can be powerful. She uses her professional knowledge of the choral milieu to foster a joyful environment and a sense of ownership within the choir, which enhance the sense of transformation a choir so often experiences when working on a piece of music together.

Joy. When Katherine spoke about the need for joy in the choral room, she did not initially attribute this as something learned from Sister Ellen, but later in our conversations, it became clear that this was a lifelong lesson learned as a high school student. Katherine said, “She taught us about joy. She had so much passion. She was a little nuts, but she had so much passion. What she did—there was always so much joy.” Katherine believes the element of joy is so important that it should be given more attention in teacher education programs. For Katherine, joy should be at the core of the music-making process.

*What you need in choirs is people who will allow you to set a really positive, fun atmosphere—people who will—students who will allow you to do that, you know? Because that—once you create that atmosphere—I think that that is something*  

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5 I use *milieu* in reference to the environment that is created within a specific choral context (i.e., a choir or a specific choral program)—not to be mistaken for the broader social context of the choral community at large.
they should probably make more of at the university level is this whole idea of just setting—how do you create that atmosphere so that kids love it in your room? Because the sky’s the limit with what you can do with them then. Right from the get-go of being able to set an atmosphere where they feel safe and where they feel challenged. And where there’s always joy, because if there isn’t, why the hell are people doing music? You know? If you really want to make a crack in making total, complete, the-heavens-are-opening sound, it has to be music-making with kids, and there has to be joy in the room. There has to be joy. And there has to be no second agendas. It has to be for them. It can’t be for—it can’t be for the glory of that teacher.

Throughout Katherine’s rehearsals with the adult chamber choir, there was a sense that the choristers not only enjoyed making music as an ensemble, but that they truly enjoyed simply being with each other. Chatter filled the room before and after rehearsal and at any time the music stopped. Interestingly, the chatter did not appear to interfere with the music-making. I noted, “When music stops there’s always an outburst of chatter, but Katherine just moves forward and as soon as she counts them in, they focus on the music again” (field notes; October 14, 2007). They worked hard, but there was never a sense that they were not passionately committed to working together. There was a tremendous sense of familiarity in the room as well, which seemed to reinforce the notion that each chorister was there by choice, singing with people with whom they enjoy making music.

Ownership. When I observed Katherine working with her adult chamber choir, I was struck by their responsiveness as well as their independence. Particularly impressive was their focused work when they broke off for sectionals. There were no designated section leaders, yet everyone contributed in their own way to maximizing the time they had to dig into the music. When I shared my observations with Katherine, she
acknowledged that it was one of the most special aspects of the choir. She explained how that sense of ownership begins in her high school chamber choir.

There is ownership, and that’s the beautiful thing. You just hit on something really important there, and that is that the seeds are there in the high school chamber choir because they take ownership. They [the chamber choir] are down there now making a phone tree [for the year]. They’re organizing a card and gift and everything for [James] because he’s in hospital. And the “Love Notes⁶”—they’ll organize all their teams for “Love Notes” and have all of that done. Any kind of socials—they will have everything organized. I don’t have to do any of it. That whole idea of ownership—they will not take ownership unless they’re really proud of what they’re doing, and that starts in high school. They have a goal, and their goal is the same as mine: no matter what, we’re going to sing, and we’re going to sing it better than anyone else can sing it.

Katherine capitalizes on their sense of ownership of the organization of the choir as she develops within them a sense of ownership of the music. She approaches this by varying her rehearsal techniques.

I did this with “Flanders Fields” a few weeks ago—[they] have to own it, and [I use] different approaches. [In rehearsal] I said, “When I’m conducting you, if I’m conducting you like crazy, then you’re not doing it for me.” But I always say if I can conduct with my pinky nail, then you know that they’re thinking about [the music] themselves. [In rehearsal], I’ll have them lie down here, and I’ll turn off the lights. Once the time changes and it’s actually dark in here by 4:00, and I’ll turn off the lights, and around this time of the year, it’s funny how it works out time-wise, the clocks change by an hour, and I get darkness for my rehearsal. And I’ll have them lie down and just close their eyes and just sing the [music] and think about the ends of their phrases. And when they sing the end of a phrase

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⁶ “Love Notes” is a fundraiser held around Valentine’s Day. The Chamber Choir divides into small groups, such as quartets and then hires the small groups out to sing love songs, in the tradition of singing telegrams.
beautifully, then they’re starting to take ownership of the music. And that’s where most choirs miss it.

While I did not witness any rehearsal techniques that focused on developing a sense of ownership, I can attest to the results. I have been listening to Katherine’s choirs sing since the late 1980s. Katherine’s choirs truly own each piece of music they perform, making the most of each phrase, and they take pride in their identities as members of the same choir. I have seen Katherine’s choirs interact with each other socially, whether it be at a pizza place after a performance, at a festival in support of Blessed Sacrament’s bands, or at a local jazz band’s performance featuring one of the choir members as the solo vocalist. The sense of ownership begins with the high school ensembles and it continues to grow as they move into the adult chamber choir.

Transformation. Once her students have established a sense of ownership within the group and they are personally invested in advancing the musicianship of the ensemble, they are a step closer to being able to let themselves go in the music and sing in such a way that it expresses a wide pallet of emotions.

*I don’t know if it’s the same way for wind instruments, but the way the choir sings the end of a phrase can really make a person melt. And that’s when you know they’ve gotten that control, and that’s when you know they’re giving in, they’re surrendering. That’s important. That’s when they surrender because they are a piece of something very special. Once you experience that, then people really surrender because they would do anything to keep getting better because it’s such a charge in their lives.*

This sense of surrender can be transformational. Her knowledge of the transformative potential of the choral experience gives her something beyond music that
is worth working towards, something that can change the lives of her students. Katherine shared a story about magical experiences with her adult chamber choir:

When you’re in that kind of environment, sometimes your very best performances happen [without an audience], and I’ve had two times that I can think of now. One was singing “O Magnum Mysterium.” It was [at the end of a rehearsal with the adult chamber choir], five or six years ago—it just clearly was a magnificent performance, and it was only us in the choral room, and at the end of it, I couldn’t speak. And Maria Stevenson just looked—she just looked at me, and I started to cry. Everyone started to cry, and it was amazing, and it was just for no reason—no audience there or anything. And it was just—we all realized that we had really transformed and gone somewhere. And it’s moments like that when you don’t need an audience that you realize, “This is so important for us. We’ve given each other so much, and we don’t need the audience.”

The power—it goes somewhere—unbelievable—without having an audience. So when you do it in front of an audience, it’s a natural extension of an intensely personal experience. Choral music has a great way of doing that. [It] has a spiritual element to it that’s really something else if you can tap into it.

Daniel Barenboim, the BBC’s 2006 Reith Lecturer, speaks to the indescribable nature of such experiences:

I firmly believe that it is really impossible to speak really deeply about music. All we can do then is speak about our own reaction to the music. . . . [There is a] connection between the inexpressible content of music and in many ways the inexpressible content of life. . . . Although sound is a very physical phenomenon, it has some inexplicable metaphysical hidden power . . . You know, when you play music, you get this peaceful quality I believe also because you are in control of something, or at least you are attempting to control something that you cannot do in the real world. You can control life and death of the sound, and if you imbue every note with a human quality, when that note dies it is exactly that, it is a feeling of death. And therefore through that experience you transcend any emotions that you can have in their life, and in a way you control time. (2006)
Reflecting on Katherine’s story of transformation, it is difficult to put into words what such experiences really mean when something intensely personal and transcendental is at the core.

**Knowledge of the choral milieu: Summary.** Katherine’s knowledge of the choral milieu has developed over a lifetime of singing in and working with choirs. As a high school student, Katherine learned the importance of joy through her experiences singing in Sister Ellen’s choir. As a choral music educator today, Katherine believes there is no greater purpose to engage in choral music than to pursue a joyful experience, which she endeavours to provide for each of her choirs. She has learned that by providing a safe environment that encourages personal development and risk-taking, choristers grow together as a community with a shared sense of ownership of the musicianship of the ensemble. Once that sense of ownership has been established, students are able to surrender to the music, furthering the expressive and transformative potential when performing repertoire, even without an audience. Katherine works to create such an environment with her high school chamber choir in particular so that they will carry it with them beyond graduation. Many of her high school students continue to nurture their love of and commitment to choral singing in Katherine’s adult chamber choir. Because so many of the members of that choir have already worked with Katherine through their high school years, the sense of community develops quickly, and the spiritual aspect of singing can be intense.

**Core Values**

Katherine’s knowledge of herself, of music, of choral singers, and of the choral milieu are integral components of her professional knowledge as a choral music educator.
In order to more fully understand Katherine’s professional knowledge, it is necessary to also explore the core values that inform how her professional knowledge gets put into practice. Throughout our interviews, Katherine often spoke of respect and safety as important elements for a choral teaching and learning environment.

**Respect.** Katherine learned the importance of personal respect through Sister Ellen and her father.

[Sister Ellen] made the decisions that I make so easy because she taught us tolerance: she taught us that we were no better than the next person. I always say that between Sister Ellen and my father—because my father’s just the sweetest man in the world. He’s a really, really, wonderful man. He sees the good in everyone and really taught us tolerance, and I’ll never forget as a child—Dad had [a] big job [downtown], and so executives would come from away, and they’d go to lunch. They were walking down Water Street one time, and Old Joe, who was a peddler at the time, he said, “Oh Tom, how are ya doin’?” And Dad stopped—the guys wouldn’t stop, they kept walking, and Dad stopped and pulled out a dollar and gave it to him. And he—Dad—I remember when I was a child, Dad saying, “We’re no better than him, and the fact that those men would walk on, it’s not right.” And he explained that to me, and I knew that as a child, so, that’s kind of emotional, even talking about it. Between Sister Ellen and Dad, they taught me to never let my ego get in the way of anything. [Sister Ellen] will always play a role. She is so—she cares so much about you as a person, first and foremost. I’m blessed because of Sister Ellen and my father being grounded and always really thinking about people and their feelings.

Through lessons learned through Sister Ellen and her father, Katherine brings a sense of humanity to her choral landscape.

*First of all, I think as a choral director, if you’re eventually going to reach a really high level of singing, there has to be tremendous respect back and forth from me respecting the kids and them respecting me. And it has to be that first*
and foremost they’re human beings—they’re people, and the choral art is too personal. There needs to be a really special bond and a really special respect between them. And I really truly care, like when I look at all of them, they all have totally different lives, and I feel privileged to have been a part of it, to just be a part of any and all of their lives, you know. That’s very enriching.

At the end of the year here at Blessed Sacrament, I am always amazed to watch how much they care for each other and in any other situation would probably never become friends. So that to me is the most important thing. Because we can always teach—you can teach the music. Everybody can get to that level because that’s theory, that’s process. So few get to [that higher level], and nobody can understand what happens there, and I really think it is that a chemistry has happened, and it’s incredible when that happens. And I see it. I see it in [the adult chamber choir]. It’s unbelievable how much they love each other. And I don’t mean it in a bragging kind of a way. [It’s] because they’ve worked so hard, and they’ve come so far in the journey together that they really care about each other a lot. And really take value in each other. So that’s the beyond [the higher level], that part, because it’s art. And I can tell when I listen to a choir. Once you go there, you’ll never go back.

By establishing reciprocal expectations for respect, Katherine lays the groundwork for providing a safe learning environment that encourages expressions of individual musicianship and identity.

**Safety.** Katherine has learned not to underestimate the importance of the environment in which the choral experience exists. Through her years as a choral music educator, she has discovered that the musical potential of a group of individuals that feel they can take risks and that comes together as a community is far greater than that of a group that does not have a sense of personal security and connectedness within the choir.

*It’s so important that we set that nice environment, where people feel challenged and safe and happy, you know. So much learning can happen in that kind of*
environment, it’s unbelievable, because every—everybody’s going to take risks, and it’s going to happen; you’re going to go for it, and you feel safe, you just feel safe and challenged, and happy, and so I think when you’re in that kind of environment, sometimes your very best performances happen.

One particular experience in one of her high school chamber choirs awakened her to the importance of a safe social environment within the choir.

_I have to keep a positive atmosphere. And I really like them to know, to get to know each other and to respect each other for their differences and not what their similarities are. I’m big on that. I never realized that until it probably knocked me over. I remember one year, 10 years ago, it was the [high school chamber choir that traveled to Vienna], and one of the guys really was kind of anti-gay, and it bugged me. I felt my job that year was to make sure that the two guys who were gay in the choir—that they—that everybody got past that and learned that we’re all different people, and that it doesn’t matter if we’re gay or not, and by the end of the year, it was really moving, and a lot of them are good friends now. And you could see [all the guys hugging] and high-fiving, so you know you’ve really accomplished something when you’ve done that, and you’ve done it through a choir setting. It was really, really heart-warming to see what happened, that they all came past that because we had a greater thing in mind, because we were a group of people who were out to accomplish something and we were a family, and they did get past it._

_I want the environment to feel safe, and I want people to feel safe in choir, because if you feel safe, you’ll let your inhibitions go, and you’ll go that extra—you’ll surrender, you’ll get into it, you’ll let yourself feel things that you wouldn’t normally feel, and you’ll let your guard down because it’s a safe environment, and it’s a place that you’re intrigued by, you know? And you can get a lot out of people when they feel like that, when they don’t feel threatened._

In order to create a safe environment for the choir, an environment in which singers will be willing to step outside their comfort zones to achieve musical excellence,
there must be respect. Without a sense of mutual respect as the foundation, the sense of safety cannot be achieved.

**Core values: Summary.** Katherine’s professional knowledge as a choral music educator is informed by her knowledge of self, music, choral singers, and the choral milieu. The ways in which she enacts that knowledge are informed by the value she holds for respect and safety. As a young child, Katherine learned lessons about respect from her father, lessons that were later reinforced by Sister Ellen. In her choirs, Katherine fosters relationships based on respect—for her choristers and amongst her choristers. She also firmly believes that mutual respect is the key element to bringing a good choir to a level where magic happens. Early in her career, Katherine encountered an example of homophobia in her high school chamber choir. Since that time, creating a safe choral space has been a priority, and the relationships that she sees develop amongst her choristers every year give her evidence that the social environment is just as—if not more—important than the musical environment in a choral rehearsal.

**Chapter Summary**

Part I of this chapter presented highlights of Katherine’s life story, based on stories of experience she shared with me in our interviews, establishing the context for this study. Part II addressed the research questions of this study, exploring the facets of Katherine’s professional knowledge that were revealed through our interviews and contextualized through observations of her choir rehearsals. Informed by experiences across her life span, Katherine’s knowledge of self, knowledge of music, knowledge of choral singers, knowledge of the choral milieu, and her core values of respect and safety guide her practice in each of her choral contexts.
Chapter Six

This chapter explores the life stories and professional knowledge of Callie and follows the structure that was established in chapters four and five. The prelude explains my relationship to Callie prior to beginning this research and describes the settings in which I interviewed and observed her for this study. Part I presents highlights of Callie’s life story. While all words attributed to Callie are her own, I have reconstructed many of her stories from multiple interview transcripts. Part II responds directly to the research questions guiding this study. It presents Callie’s professional knowledge, organized thematically, as revealed to me through her own telling of her life story. Throughout this chapter, the words of Callie appear in italics.

Prelude

My Relationship to Callie

As I rummage through my boxes of photos of old school band trips, I come across pictures of Callie conducting a vocal jazz ensemble at National MusicFest in Halifax. I didn’t know Callie personally then, but I loved to watch her ensembles perform. Having memorized concert programs, and having seen many of them perform as soloists at the Kiwanis Music Festival, I knew most of the vocalists by name, even though I had never met them. Callie taught at a local high school, Bishop O’Neill, when I first saw her conduct, but she also directed community-based vocal jazz ensembles, comprised primarily of her private voice students, most of whom were studying classical voice with her. The first time I saw Callie conduct one of her vocal jazz ensembles, I was struck by the absolute joy that was present in the room. She was on the stage of the D. F. Cook Hall at the MUN School of Music. There were probably 12-15 young women standing on
risers, wearing blue dresses, and they were all beaming. Their eyes weren’t glued to Callie, though they checked in with her on a regular basis. Instead, their eyes were primarily communicating directly with the audience. Their bodies moved with the music. Nothing was overdone, but the energy was infectious. Not only was this my introduction to Callie, this was my introduction to vocal jazz. Inspired by Callie’s ensembles, I would go on to purchase recordings of Manhattan Transfer and New York Voices. Aside from being enthralled with the singers before me, I found it difficult to take my eyes off of Callie, her wide eyes, and her beaming smile. There was no doubt in my mind that she was in love with the music, with her singers, and with the act of sharing their experience with an audience.

I eventually met Callie at a music camp a few years later, where she was the director of the choral and musical theatre programs. It was there that I saw the extreme dedication and hard work Callie put into providing her students with incredible musical experiences. It was wonderful to see that—to learn that the passion and joy were not enough—there had to be organization and commitment too. Throughout my years as an undergraduate music education student, Callie was one of my supporters. She offered up her classroom as a place for me to do teaching observations, and as I embarked on my career as a music educator in Calgary, Callie offered advice and an open door, willing to share resources and anything else I might need. When it came time to recruit thesis participants, Callie seemed like a natural choice. We already had a good rapport, and her work as a choral music educator had inspired me early on in my development as a musician. When I explained to Callie what my research would entail, without hesitation, she agreed to participate. Callie is a natural story-teller, and using stories as a way of
exploring professional knowledge appealed to her. She was also inspired by the notion of contributing to any work related to finding new ways to understand teacher knowledge.

### Setting the Research Stage

Callie and I met for interviews three times over a period of eight months. The first interview took place in the music room at Callie’s school, St. Ignatius. The school year had ended, so there was no extraneous noise to interfere with our conversations. The second and third interviews took place in the keyboard lab at St. Ignatius. During those interviews, though we were behind closed doors, school was in session, and there were interruptions from end of day bells, students knocking at the door, and administration calling Callie through the intercom. Initially, I was concerned that the interruptions would interfere with the progress and fluidity of our interviews, but those concerns were put to rest when I listened to the recordings of the interviews and transcribed our conversations. In the case of each interruption, Callie never missed a beat—she would pick up from exactly where she had left off prior to the interruption. Fascinating and impressive were the cases in which she would be interrupted mid-sentence by a knock at the door or by the intercom, proceed to have a conversation with somebody else, and return to our conversation, completing the sentence that had been left hanging. In retrospect, it was fitting to meet with Callie in a somewhat chaotic environment. It was a true taste of Callie’s daily life in between classes and rehearsals.

Throughout the research process, I had the opportunity to observe Callie work with her school chamber choir. The rehearsals took place after school, in the school music room, a shared space between the choral and instrumental programs at St. Ignatius. Chairs, music stands, and instruments were strewn everywhere, sure signs of a multi-use
classroom and rehearsal space. I had previously known the room as a chapel, when St. Ignatius had been a high school in the former Roman Catholic School Board of St. John’s. Though no longer a sacred space, as would be revealed through my interviews with Callie, the room now bore witness to transformational encounters with music, encounters that would transcend human experience.

**Part I: Callie’s Story**

**Early Life**

Callie’s formal musical life began at an early age. Outside of school, Callie studied piano and voice with Maria Tucker. She completed Trinity College piano exams and attended theory classes on Saturday mornings. But it was Callie’s musical experiences in elementary school that had the most powerful effect on her life as a music educator. It was in the early years of grades three through nine that Callie would establish her vision of becoming a music teacher, when Sister Anita made a lasting impression.

* I started at Sacred Redeemer Girls’ School, and there was a choir in primary, but I don’t remember much about that. The profound effect was from grade three to grade nine, when we moved up to the elementary school and we met Sister Anita for the first time. [She was] the person who was obsessed with music, and who’s probably driven me to the obsession. She was one of these women who was driven. She made a huge impact on me, so much so that I wanted to be like her.

Musical theatre has been a core component of the music programs at both high schools where Callie has taught. Her introduction to musicals came early on:

* I was in my first musical in grade three. I started at Sacred Redeemer with a nun that did little musicals. They weren’t great big things, but she did them every year. I played Jack in “The Wedding of Jack and Jill” when I was in grade three. And the next year, we did one called “The Doll’s Wedding,” and I was the
apothecary. I played a man—or a boy—for every single performance at Sacred Redeemer because I had short hair and I was flat-chested. Every year she would do these musicals, and I always had a fairly significant part. So there were always lines to be memorized and songs to learn and dances to memorize and costumes to put on.

One of the things with Sacred Redeemer was that if you were in the choir, you were also in the musicals, and you were also in the dances. And every time there was a dance—we used to do all those little country dances—I was a boy with the black stretchy pants and the white blouse. So I actually asked my mother when I was in grade eight if she could phone Sister Anita and ask if I could be a girl just once before I left grade nine. It was getting to be a bit much. Anyway, I got to be a girl in one of those dances we did, and actually got to wear a dress.

Callie loved the experience of the musical so much that she led her first production in her neighbourhood one summer.

I directed my first musical when I was 11—the Craigmillar Avenue version of the “Mother Goose” operetta, which is in one of those Making Music Your Own books. What happened was the Silver Burdett series came out, so the school gave away all the defunct Making Music Your Own books, and we were the recipients of them. I was eleven at the time. My friend Valerie and I were given one each, and that summer, in our boredom, sick of playing Barbies and all that, sick of sitting on the swings, I said, “Sure I’ll direct a musical. How hard can it be? I’ve been in two!” I remember the casting; I remember making people try out; I remember giving my brother a menial job because I wasn’t giving him a good part because he was my brother. And there was a girl who played Little Miss Muffet. She lived down by the bus stop, and she had red hair, red curly hair, and she was our Little Miss Muffet.

Aside from learning on her feet as the director of a neighbourhood musical at the age of eleven, Callie had several opportunities at school to explore the role of teacher as well.
By grade five, because I was taking piano lessons—I started piano lessons when I was in grade three—and because I could play, and I certainly wasn’t very good, but because I could play the notes, I took sectional rehearsals. So there were three pianos in the school in two small rooms, and I would take the second sopranos and another girl would take the altos, and we would pound out notes.

When I was in grade eight and grade nine at Sacred Redeemer, I put my own solo singers in the festival, from Sacred Redeemer, because Sister Anita didn’t have time to teach them. I would take the grade threes and fours and teach them their solos in the little practice room, and do all that with them. Just before the festival, Sister Anita would listen to them and critique them and fine-tune things, and I would be there for that too. So you know, I’ve been teaching for a very long time. I learned a lot on my feet.

While Callie took tremendous inspiration from her musical experiences at Sacred Redeemer, there was one negative aspect that stood out for her, even at the time: the pressure of competition.

One of my biggest regrets about Sacred Redeemer—as much as I do respect the nun that taught me and did inspire me—is that we always worked for 90s. It was always about beating somebody else and about getting a 90, and god, my stomach turned on that whole thing. One of the only times I ever got in trouble—I was a goody two-shoes kid—one of the only times I got in trouble in school was in grade nine, when I would not pray; I would not say the Rosary on the bus on the way to the Kiwanis festival so that we could get a 90. I refused to say the Rosary and said, “No, I’m not praying for a 90 when people in the world are dying. I’m not praying for a 90,” and [I was sent] to the principal’s office. They were going to call my mother. Yeah, my friend and I got in trouble because we wouldn’t pray for a 90 because we said it was wrong. Isn’t that a riot? That was my rebellious act. Never ever pipped off school—never did anything wrong, I just wouldn’t say the Rosary for a 90. There you go. I stood by my convictions on that . . . and I think I really got turned from the whole competitive thing very early in my life and felt like “No, that’s not what it’s about.”
Callie’s distaste for competition, however, did not overshadow the tremendous positive effect that her elementary school had on her musical life.

But now the funny thing is having said all these things about that nun that taught me at Sacred Redeemer—Sister Anita. She did it the only way she knew how, and in those days, everything was defined by Kiwanis Music Festival and competitions, so she did the only thing that she knew. But, outside of that, she was definitely my inspiration . . . I remember the profound effect she had on me in that I wanted to be like the older girls because she talked to the older girls. There were two girls in the choir—Linda Holden and Debbie Bartlett—and I wanted to be like them. My sole ambition when I was in grade three was, “I want to be like Debbie Bartlett.” Debbie never knew anything because she was just one of the big girls, but they would stay around and talk to Sister afterwards, and gather around the piano and chat, and I would sort of file out with all the other little girls and think, “One day when I’m big, she’ll talk to me, and I’ll be special in her life.” She was such a powerful person in my life, such a huge person in my life.

After grade nine, high school did not provide Callie with the same inspiration:

[Elementary school] was a profound experience, and when I went on to Blessed Sacrament, it was less so. Sister Evangeline, was a lovely, lovely woman, very gentle, but she wasn’t inspiring. We had a huge choir there, but it wasn’t a choir that demanded much of you. It wasn’t one that asked of you like Sacred Redeemer did. You really gave your soul to Sacred Redeemer, and there were some issues with that too, I suppose because—there was a lot of resentment from the kids that weren’t in that world—that were outside of music, and you felt that. You felt that alienation from other people. But high school wasn’t profound for me.

The lasting impression of Callie’s elementary school experiences cannot be overstated:

I would venture to say that I probably learned more [at] Sacred Redeemer about teaching than I ever did at music school.
Undergraduate Education

Pursuing degrees in music and music education was never a question for Callie. They were a critical step in achieving her goal of becoming a music educator. Much like her years in high school, her time in music school would not live up to the experiences she had had at Sacred Redeemer.

My music degree was really a means to an end. I hated music school by year three, I really did. I did have a good voice teacher my first year there, but then she moved away . . . I loved singing in MUN Chamber Choir. I loved that. I didn’t like King’s techniques, I didn’t like his negativity at all, but I did like the music—I really enjoyed that. I enjoyed the [Chamber Choir] trips—they were fun. The one who had the most profound effect on me was Dr. Hartmann. He was teaching a course in Art Song, and he was the one that I loved most. He had an incredible capacity for understanding music and digging, digging underneath, and that was really special, the course that I did with him. But I can’t say that music school was inspirational for me. But you know, it got me the degree, and the degree got me the jobs.

For many years, Callie directed community-based vocal jazz ensembles in St. John’s. Through these ensembles, Callie traveled to national festivals and worked with leaders in the field, such as Phil Mattson and Michele Weir. It was during her years as an undergraduate student that Callie first ventured into vocal jazz, though this was outside the realm of her experiences within the School of Music.

And let me tell you how I came to do vocal jazz. Oh my—talk about being a newbie at things. There were records in at MUN Music School. They were demo records of songs, and Hal Leonard was the publisher, and they would give you—in those days, they would give you the entire song. Now they just give you the first clip. There had been some kind of a music convention—there were massive amounts of instruments and pianos and keyboards, and all that kind of stuff, but there was a choral music area, and that’s where I saw these demo records. So,
one of the people who was working on the booth had tons of them and said, “Would you like to have some?” I wanted anything free and said, “Yes I’ll have all of that.” So I remember listening to it that summer and hearing a song called “When I Meet My Man” [sings excerpt]. And I thought, “Wow, what’s that?” I had never heard music like that before that was choral. It was SSA, and I thought, “I want to do that.” So when I started [my women’s vocal ensemble], I said, “This is the stuff I want to do. I want to do this kind of music.” I never really knew it was sort of a vocal jazz thing. I had no clue what I was doing, had no idea that this was a whole genre of music that was out there. That’s where it started from: “When I Meet My Man.” It’s amazing. Literally, it was born out of ignorance, it really was, but I loved the rhythm. I loved that there was something different; I loved that nobody was doing it here.

While Callie was establishing herself as a leader of vocal jazz in St. John’s, as part of her music education degree, she took a semester to do her teaching internship in Harlow, England, where they appreciated all that she had to offer. Callie appreciated the opportunity to teach abroad, but knew that Newfoundland was the only place she could establish her career.

_They phoned me when I was [in England] and asked me to take a job at Holy Rosary [near St. John’s]. [I had also been offered] a job in Harlow for the next year, [and] it was really nice to come out of my student teaching and be offered that. Even though I was tempted because the lure of living in England was attractive, I really felt it was my place to give back._

**Early Teaching Career**

The first ten years of Callie’s school teaching career brought her a number of diverse experiences: teaching Kindergarten to grade eleven music in an all-grades school; teaching grade one classroom core, when she lost her singing voice; and teaching Kindergarten to grade six music to French Immersion students in an inner city school.
Callie’s passion for teaching musical theatre was established early on in her career, and a master’s degree in children’s theatre would eventually further fuel that passion.

When I started teaching, in those days of my naivety in directing, I did the sets, I did the costumes, I did the choreography. I made all the lederhosen for the kids, except I couldn’t sew, so I glued them all together, never realizing that when you hung them over the back of the chair when they dried, they would dry very crispy, and they would fall apart. It was a very “learn as you go” kind of thing. But I did [a musical] every year at Holy Rosary, and the more I did, the more I fell in love with it, and in 1983 at Holy Rosary, I directed Annie. That was my first Broadway show, and after that, I said, “Okay, I can’t go back to the small stuff now.”

After a difficult bout with mononucleosis, Callie lost her singing voice. In an attempt to heal, she made the decision to move into grade one classroom teaching, teaching all subjects with the exceptions of music and physical education.

I had mono when I started teaching, so I destroyed my voice when I was [teaching music] during my first four years. Then I transferred to St. Luke’s, which I really hated, and I think part of why I hated St. Luke’s was because I couldn’t sing. I could barely talk, I was so sick, and not healing, and so frustrated with that, so that took its toll on my job too. And then I went into grade one for three years, putting snowsuits on and pulling pencils out of noses and things, but I did it to heal myself. I did it so that I could control my speaking during the day so I could get better.

While this experience was difficult for Callie’s musical spirit, it taught her valuable lessons about the gifts of children.

There’s a preciousness about that age because there’s still an innocence and yet they are aware of so many things. I remember when I was teaching grade one, the biggest realization—because when I was teaching them music and only had them for two and a half hours a week, you never got to associate it [the innocence and
the awareness] like that. But when I had the vocal nodes and I was teaching grade one, spending the whole day with them, watching the dynamics . . .

Through her time teaching grade one, Callie discovered the power of the lessons children can teach us.

One day, I was teaching religion—I was teaching everything in grade one—and there was a song called “Lead Me Shepherd, Lead Me.” That was in the religion class, and when we would do it for class, there wasn’t time to learn all the song, and so [the whole class] would do the chorus, and Rachel would sing the verses. I’d ask her to do it because she had a sweet little singing voice. One day she stood up to sing it, and she said “You know, everybody has talents. I have a talent for singing. And that’s why I’m singing ‘Lead Me Shepherd,’ but Scott has a talent for hockey, and Heather has a talent for being a good friend.” And I was sitting there thinking, “So why do I need to teach this class religion? Because this kid clearly got it better than . . .” There she was, she was justifying why she was doing the solo. She was smart enough that she’d know there might be resentment. Isn’t that something? So, children sometimes teach us so much. I’m constantly amazed at how much I am taught at the hands of children. And the younger they are, sometimes the more enlightening they are.

After three years of teaching grade one, Callie was ready to return to teaching full-time music. The timing could not have appeared to be any better when the job of her dreams opened up at Blessed Sacrament, where she had attended high school years earlier. However, heeding advice from her doctor, Callie’s return to music teaching was delayed by a year. With the missed opportunity to teach at Blessed Sacrament behind her, Callie moved to St. Benedict, a French immersion school, where she taught Kindergarten to grade six music for two years.

[I spent three years in grade one], and then a job opened up at Blessed Sacrament . . .” and I wanted to apply, but I wasn’t better. When I went to see Dr. Oakley, he said, “I guarantee if you go into that job, it’ll be worse than if you
were dead because your voice is still not better.” And I reluctantly withdrew my application for that job, thinking that Blessed Sacrament was the pinnacle. That was what I waited for my whole life, was to teach at Blessed Sacrament, and I couldn’t apply for it. So, it didn’t sit well with me for the next year that I had to put in the classroom. At the end of the next year, there was nothing available in the city—nothing, so I agreed to do a one-year swap with Carol Murphy. She really didn’t like it at St. Benedict, and I just wanted to get out of Holy Rosary. I just wanted to get out of the classroom—I was in grade one, and it was killing me; it was killing my whole soul. So we did a mutual swap. It was my first foray into teaching in French Immersion—it was K to 6, [and it] turned out to be okay.

After two years in the elementary school environment, Callie knew it was time for yet another change.

I said to myself, “I have to get out of here and do something other than this,” and that is when I went to do the master’s, after two years there. And we did musicals and everything at that school, but I said, “Now, I need to do myself a favour and get myself a master’s, get myself recharged.”

Graduate School

After ten years of school teaching, Callie embraced the opportunity to further her education through a master’s degree in children’s theatre, which she pursued in the United States. Immediately following, she began doctoral work in music education, which she eventually abandoned and focused on a new phase of her career: choral music education and musical theatre at the high school level.

I had promised myself in the beginning that after I had been teaching for 10 years, that I would do something different, that I wouldn’t go and teach 30 years without a stop.

When Callie began her doctoral work, philosophical differences with her advisor made graduate school a difficult place to be. Callie left the program early on and returned
to full-time school teaching. However, during her summer semester, Callie had the fortune of singing in a choir directed by Robert Fountain. While she left the program without a PhD, she left challenged and enlightened all the same.

*The good thing that came out of [my doctoral work] that summer was singing in Robert Fountain’s choir. He was a fantastic, fantastic man, and when he directed that choir that summer, he couldn’t even stand for the rehearsal. He was so old, he sat on a stool. We had all these wonderful classical—big pieces, it was a big choir, and we did Handel and Brahms—we did the “Liebeslieder Waltzes,” I remember that—we were preparing for a concert, but you know to me, there was a lot of it that was still ragged because it was a “come-all-ye” sort of a choir because it was for credit, and some people just wanted to be in it for course credit, and some people wanted to be in it because it was Robert Fountain. And just before we did our only concert—it was our last rehearsal—he said that he was going to let us go early, and I thought, “You’re going to let us go early? My god, this is still not fixed, and you’re going to let us go early?” There was the nun in me. Anyway, he said he wanted to speak to us for a minute, and he said:

“You know, I’ve been doing this my whole life, and I’ve been conducting since I was a very young man. I’ve learned a lot at the podium. Now, this is not perfect by any means, and I know that. I appreciate everything that you’ve all brought to this choir, all of your talents. Some of you are here because it’s a credit; some of you are here because you needed to fill in something in your summer program; some of you are here because you just want to sing; some of you are here because you are conducting students, and you’re doing your master’s or your doctorate; and we all come together to sing. I realize that there are a lot of things that we still need to do to make this choir perfect, but I just need to say one thing to you. If one person in that audience is lifted because of the music we bring, then we’ve done something.”

And I was listening to him, thinking, “Oh my god, this is Dr. Robert Fountain.” And he said, “It was a long time before I learned that.” And I just went, “Oh my god,” because there I was going, “This is not fixed, this is not
fixed, this is not, you know . . . This is Robert Fountain’s choir; this is supposed to be perfect.” And then I realized he was right. . . . It’s not the 90s, and it’s not the gold medals at MusicFest. It is because we’ve lifted someone to a higher place.

Later Career

While Callie was in the United States for graduate school, a full-time high school music position at Bishop O’Neill opened up in St. John’s. The position had traditionally been primarily a band position, but Callie was ready to take risks and push boundaries, and this paid off immensely.

It was when I was away that the job opened up at Bishop O’Neill. When that opened up, I knew they had done one musical there, and I thought, “They’re ready to embrace that, at least on some level,” and that was when I had to convince them that they needed me and not somebody else. It was a very informal interview—it was at the Christian Brothers’ house. I was in my master’s program, so I flew home a week before for my birthday and spent a Saturday up there talking to Brother Lynch. [Then] I waited for a couple of months, and when I finally found out in July, the nun who taught me at Sacred Redeemer said, “Callie, don’t go to the high school. You will regret it because there’s no respect. There’s no respect there. You’ll regret it.” Anyway, it was the best experience I’ve ever had in my life. I cherish those nine years. I wouldn’t have changed my experiences at Bishop O’Neill for anything in the world. That was such a soul-satisfying experience for me, both from teaching the kids and the staff that I worked with and the administration that I worked with.

After nine years at Bishop O’Neill, the school system in Newfoundland and Labrador faced major structural changes, as the denominational education system was abolished. Bishop O’Neill became a junior high school, and Callie was reassigned to another high school, St. Ignatius. This move was not an easy one for Callie:
When you know something’s at the end of its days, you cherish it that much more. We all wax eloquently about the things that are gone in life, like your glory days or whatever. I certainly was probably one to lament very loudly about the fact that those days were gone.

Callie survived the transition, and she went on to build a thriving musical theatre program at St. Ignatius.

Looking Forward

As Callie nears retirement, she is proud to have had a diverse career with no regrets. Like many music educators, Callie struggles to maintain balance in her life. This lack of balance reflects the dedication she has brought to her career. Unsure of what the future will hold for her and for the program she has built at St. Ignatius, Callie is nervous about what the next few years will bring.

I have never managed to do [balance] well. Never. I just had that conversation at lunch time—that when I hear people say how much they love Christmas, I get this resentment in me. I’ve always had that because I’ve always been so involved with the music and concerts and all that at Christmas time. As much as I like the concerts in that moment, and I like the dinner theatres in that moment, all of the lead-up and all of the rehearsals, when everybody else is out shopping, when everybody else is decorating their house, when everybody else is baking, I have—it’s this weird thing I have, I have this little pang of resentment. I wouldn’t call it jealousy—that would be very heavy to say that . . .

But, you know, those are the choices you make, and part of my reason for not having children was not because I couldn’t but because I knew what I would do to them. And I knew that I would rob from them the way that I robbed from my own life. I have a really patient husband, and thank god he cooks, and thank god he cleans because he’s always there when I’m not. In later years, since I’ve learned to bake, I try to at least make up for the difference by saying, “Here’s some date crumbles!” I’ve made great sacrifices in my life. I make no bones
about that. When I look back, I won’t have any regrets in terms of what I contributed to my school, but I might have some regrets about what I didn’t take for my family time, and I just hope that I live long enough to enjoy a long retirement.

Callie plans to retire in two years, but when she looks at her grade 10 students and realizes they are the last graduating class she will teach, she thinks, “Oh my god, I’m not sure I’m ready to [retire] yet . . . The person who complains about the fact that I don’t get Christmas is now saying I don’t know if I want to leave all of that.” Callie feels fortunate to have had a diverse teaching career, and until she walks away from school teaching, she is prepared to continue to enjoy the experience alongside her students, “constantly evolving as human beings and constantly evolving as teachers and as learners.”

Part II: Callie’s Professional Knowledge

My first research question asks what constitutes the professional knowledge of each of the choral music educators in this study. In this section, I describe what I consider to be the main components of Callie’s professional knowledge, which were revealed through my analysis of the transcripts of our interviews and my observation notes of Callie’s rehearsals. I have identified five main facets of Callie’s professional knowledge: her knowledge of self, her knowledge of her role as a teacher, her knowledge of choral music, her knowledge of the choral milieu, and a commitment to a set of values that guides her practice.

My second research question asks how the professional knowledge of the choral music educators in this study has been shaped by their life experiences. Through this section, I describe how Callie’s professional knowledge is manifested in her practice, as
well as significant interactions with people and events that have informed each of the five facets of professional knowledge.

My third research question asks how the participants’ experiences of developing as choral music educators within the specific social, cultural, and political contexts of Newfoundland and Labrador have shaped their professional knowledge. This question will be addressed in the “Knowledge of Self” section of this chapter and will be discussed further in chapter seven.

**Knowledge of Self**

Three facets of Callie’s self-knowledge emerged in our research interviews. The first is a pair of beliefs that shape Callie’s understanding of significant events in her life. Callie believes in destiny, and she believes that everything in life comes full circle. The second includes two aspects of how Callie understands herself as a learner: Callie sees herself as a lifelong learner, and she sees herself as someone who is constantly learning from her students. The third facet of Callie’s self-knowledge entails her understanding of her cultural identity as a Newfoundlander.

**Destiny.** Callie believes that her career path has been a product of destiny. While she has made the most of every teaching situation she has encountered and has taken sole responsibility for her professional development as an educator, she believes that destiny brought her to the schools where she could make a difference. Callie shares her belief in destiny with her students in order to assure them that they too will find their way to success in their own careers. From an early age, Callie was confident that she would become a music teacher.
When I was in grade four, I knew that I wanted to be a teacher, and I knew that I wanted to teach music. [That’s] pretty awesome when you think that at 10 years old, you knew what you wanted to be and you never altered course—because this was my destiny.

Relatively early on in Callie’s professional life, a full-time music position opened up at Blessed Sacrament, where Callie had attended high school. Then, as now, Blessed Sacrament was regarded as a flagship school for choral music education. It was Callie’s dream job, but the timing was not right. Callie had been on partial vocal rest, and her doctor told her that if she returned to a music position at that time, she would jeopardize her recovery. Callie listened to her doctor and withdrew her application for the job.

Several years later, a high school position at Bishop O’Neill became available. Recovered from her vocal problems and with a master’s degree in children’s theatre in hand, Callie jumped at the opportunity to move from teaching elementary school to teaching high school. While Bishop O’Neill’s music program traditionally focused on band, Callie knew that seeds had already been planted that would enable her to further develop programs in choral music and musical theatre. Reflecting back on “what might have been” with Blessed Sacrament, Callie believes that the right teacher ended up there, while Bishop O’Neill was waiting for her.

I think it’s a lot of destiny involved, you know, I really do. I have definite thoughts about how I came to teach at Bishop O’Neill. When that opened up, I knew [they had done] one of Ged Blackmore’s musicals, and I thought they were ready to embrace that, at least on some level. [It was the] best experience I’ve ever had in my life. I cherish those nine years. And I was meant to be there; I was meant to do that—not to be at Blessed Sacrament. I have not a minute’s regret in my life about not being at Blessed Sacrament. Because it did what it needed to do—through [someone else]—a totally different path than I would have taken it, and, and you
know, I brought something to Bishop O’Neill that they really didn’t have before. I was able to take it and develop it more and do that much more in musicals and in theatre, and take them in a direction they’d never been in before. Bishop O’Neill was a precious, precious time in my life. I wouldn’t have missed that for anything, and Blessed Sacrament could not have given me that. I wouldn’t have changed my experiences at Bishop O’Neill for anything in the world. That was such a soul-satisfying experience for me, both from teaching the kids and the staff that I worked with and the administration that I worked with.

Given the incredible experiences Callie had teaching at Bishop O’Neill, it was difficult to remember the role destiny may have been playing when it came time to move to St. Ignatius. The move happened as a result of the restructuring of the school system in St. John’s once the public denominational education system had been abolished.

[It] was a little harder, coming here. It was just a really special time [at O’Neill], so that made this transition a little difficult. But you know, I’ve had some incredible teaching experiences here and have met some incredible kids here, and if O’Neill hadn’t closed I would not have had this experience, because these are kids that would not have come to Bishop O’Neill. Jennifer Roche is one case in point. She is not just a past student, but she’s a dear friend, and she will remain a dear friend for a very long time, and had life played out as it would have, she would [not have ended up in my program].

Callie’s belief in destiny has enabled her to see the bright side of difficult situations. When she finds her students struggling to come to terms with their own futures, Callie encourages them to trust in what the future holds in store for them.

I really do believe that there’s such a thing as a cosmic—you know—you are meant to be here kind of thing. Serendipity or whatever. I’m completely convinced that all this stuff is destiny, and you know, when the kids now that I have, when they just want to hit a wall and something and say, “This is not what I thought it was going to be,” I say, “No, but you’ll find your path because it’s—there’s a
destiny there, and it’s meant [to be]. You just gotta trust that there’s a reason for this, and you’re coming through for a reason. Everything happens the way it’s supposed to happen." And I firmly believe that.

It is important to note that Callie’s belief in destiny does not give her permission to sit back and simply let life unfold on its own. In fact, it appears to be the opposite. Callie firmly believes in the importance of commitment, dedication, and hard work. With those elements in place, the destined path becomes clear.

**Everything comes full circle.** It is clear that Callie’s teaching has been informed by an apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975/2002) that dates back to her elementary schooling with Sister Anita. With Sister Anita, Callie had her first experiences with musical theatre, which would later become a lifelong passion and cornerstone of her high school music programs. Beyond her own elementary school experience, Callie did not find further outlets to explore musical theatre, but she was drawn back to it when she first began teaching elementary school.

*I really believe that things come full circle. I started at Sacred Redeemer with a nun that did little musicals, you know. They weren’t great big things, but she did them every year. And it was only when I started teaching, the first year, in 1979 at Holy Rosary, I just started to teach and I thought, “Well I’ve just got to direct a musical.” So I started with “Hansel and Gretel,” which was one that we had done at Sacred Redeemer, so that was sort of my little bit of a safety.*

As we age, we often find ourselves surprised—and perhaps even embarrassed—to hear ourselves utter phrases we once hated to hear come from the mouths of our parents. The same thing can be said for teachers. While Callie was inspired by the passion of Sister Anita, she was not blind to her shortcomings. Yet, years later, she could not help
but notice she was putting her own spin on the words she once hated to hear coming from Sister Anita’s mouth.

And as I got older, there were things about the way she taught that I didn’t like. There were things that were really negative. That was just her way of trying to get the best out of us. She would say “This is hopeless.” And I’d go, “When I’m a teacher, I’ll never say that word; I’ll never say the word hopeless.” I may say lots of things, and [my O’Neill students] will tell you that my new word became, “Well—that has potential.” And they learned to resent that, because potential just—you might as well say it was hopeless . . . But at least “potential” did not say “hopeless.”

Through the good and the bad, Sister Anita was still the primary source of inspiration for Callie’s pursuit of a career as a music educator. In a lesson of social responsibility for her students, Callie teaches them the value of “giving back” and showing thanks by taking her choirs to perform at the convent where Sister Anita now lives with a group of retired nuns.

I would have to say as much as there were times that I really hated Sister Anita for how much she pushed us at Sacred Redeemer—talk about things coming full circle—we do performances every year now at the Presentation convent. I really believe in giving back because those people are not in the community anymore; we don’t see the nuns anymore. So I bring my choir, because they also don’t know what a convent is, and I bring them over there so they can sing for the nuns, and they love it when the boys come. Oh the nuns love it when the boys sing solo. I say, “So you’ve got to be right there for the nuns who can’t stand up anymore; you’ve got to be ready to coopie down and let them hold your hand and say how sweet you are and all of that.” But, it’s marvellous—it’s my time to give back and you know what—I wouldn’t be doing what I’m doing now, if it wasn’t for her.

As in her belief in destiny, Callie’s belief in everything coming full circle does not translate to merely waiting around for life to play out as it should. When things come
full circle, she sees an opportunity to push herself to do her best and to contribute something new the second time around. This sense of giving back is inextricably linked to her sense of coming full circle, and that is the life lesson she passes onto her students.

**Lifelong learning.** Callie understands herself as a lifelong learner, and she does not separate who she is as a teacher from who she is as a learner. She believes that personal and professional growth are integral components of being an effective teacher.

While it can be difficult to continue your own personal and professional development as a musician while managing the responsibilities of a full-time teaching job that entails extra-curricular rehearsals before school, after school, and at lunch, Callie has done just that since the very beginning of her career. After graduation from Memorial, Callie became involved with community musicals. To this day, she can be found on stage, acting in local theatre productions, as well as singing in a local women’s choir.

*In ’79, I started doing community theatre—the fall musicals . . . I only did them every second year because with the teaching, it was just so much, with twenty-one private students besides [school], and three church choirs. But I started doing that and started learning a lot from what I was seeing with those professional or semi-professional productions at the Arts [Centre]. So that was always giving me the information that I wanted and giving me ideas and sort of upping the level of everything that I did [at school].*

Aside from gaining greater practical experience through her direct involvement in theatre productions, Callie also completed her master’s degree in children’s theatre, which provided her with greater theoretical knowledge as well.

*After 10 years [of teaching], I said I was going to go back to school, and it seemed right that I was going to do the second degree in theatre because I was directing musicals without any theatre background. Music and theatre are really a lot the same, so I just wanted to get a little bit—I wanted the paperwork, I*
wanted the credibility of having the master’s in theatre. Even though I’d done a lot of musical theatre myself, I wanted the grounding in real theatre—the theory and the practicality. A lot of the stuff I intuitively knew, but the new ideas that I took from that program, I was able to use in the next years that followed.

Despite what any objective observer would deem a successful career, Callie has never let go of the sense that learning is a lifelong endeavour and that professional development is an ongoing process: the quest for personal excellence never ends.

We’re never really what we want to be. We’re never really—I mean I’m constantly learning. I’m two years from retirement and constantly learning, constantly fixing how I evaluate things, fixing, trying new things with my teaching, so I don’t know what success is . . . I don’t know what success is. I really don’t know how you define success.

Callie’s trouble with the word success appears to rest with the implication of attaining an ultimate goal. For Callie, there is always something higher to reach for, and this enables her to always be the best possible teacher for her students. Callie understands herself as a lifelong learner, and this informs some of the life lessons she imparts to her students. This will be discussed further in later sections of this chapter.

**Learning from students.** Callie understands herself as a teacher who constantly learns from her students. With a sense of humility and openness, Callie has learned important life lessons through them. Even as a young classroom teacher, she learned lessons about kindness and compassion from a grade one student, Rachel. The lessons she learned from Rachel have always stayed with her.

Every month, I would switch—they were sitting at tables, so there would probably be six people at a table, and every month I’d switch tables. The first couple of months I’d tell them where they had to go, and then after that, I’d say, “Okay now, you can choose; you can have some friends at your table if you’re good and
well-behaved.” There was one little girl in the class, six years old, who would come up to the desk and say—there were two little girls in my class that were in special ed—and this little girl, Rachel, would come up and say, “Miss, it’s okay, I’ll sit with these two little girls.” And I’d say, “Why do you want to do that?” And she’d say, “Well I know they don’t have a lot of friends in this class, but I’ll be their friend.” And then there was another girl in the class—Cathy—whose mother had cancer, but nobody in the class knew. And Rachel would come up and say, “Is Cathy having a bad day?” And I was thinking, “I’m not going to tell a class of six-year olds what’s going on.” [But Rachel would say:] “Cathy is having a bad day, so I’m going to sit with her. Can I change places and sit with her today?” Perception? Children sometimes teach us so much. . . . Out of the mouths of babes, as that expression goes.

As I will discuss later, one of Callie’s goals is to teach her high school students to let go of their egos and to be humble. Ironically, from these same students, Callie has learned lessons about humility. The following example illustrates this point, as well as the comfortable rapport she has established with her students.

_Sometimes I’m a bit rough on them. Like, “Come on guys, it’s a major third. Come on! You’re not getting that?!” And then I think, “Okay, that’s not the way to say it.” Actually I did that in rehearsal the other day. I said, “It’s not rocket science! Come on—it’s a major key!” And one of the boys said, “Miss, did we get this music before?” And I said, “No, I gave it today.” And he was like, “Yeah, I thought so. So we’re seeing it for the first time, hey?!?” And I thought, “Put in my place.” But you know, they were doing their best, and yes, it was in F major, and yes, it was—it should have been easy, but this was my rugby guy, who [sings] because [he really likes] to sing, and [he doesn’t] do the whole lesson thing outside. So they put you in your place sometimes. But he did it in such a nice way._

Callie understands that the ego-centricity of many teenagers is part of their social development rather than a reflection of an actual sense of entitlement. Through her career, she has learned not to judge students too quickly when they present themselves
with an air of arrogance. By engaging with such students from a place of respect, students feel more comfortable letting down their guards and in the process learn life lessons.

We’re constantly evolving as human beings and constantly evolving as teachers and as learners, and I’m always fascinated in this business about how much the kids teach me. In terms of how they teach me about how I handle a situation or how they teach me in terms of their kindness, their humanity—sometimes lack thereof. But a lot of times when you think that when the world is telling you that kids have changed and that we’re living in a disrespectful world, [and that] we’re living in a world of entitlement—and that kind of gratuitous behaviour—yes, it is there, and yes, you see it. But just when you think, “Oh yeah, well nobody says thank you,” then they do. So you’re constantly being reminded that there is a lot of goodness, and when you see kids affirming each other in situations, you think it isn’t that ego-centric. It isn’t entirely the ego-centric time that you think it is. [For example, a boy] called me on the weekend and said, “Miss, I really need to talk to you. I know my report cards have been really bad and my parents said that, you know, and that you were really concerned . . .” We had a very long-winded conversation about that, and at the end of it, he said, “Thank you for talking to me. Thank you, Miss. I value your opinion.” That’s worth a million dollars. This is a kid that other teachers in the school have said, “Oh my god, he’s so filled with himself—oh my god, he’s so arrogant.” And he can be, and he shows that, but that’s the side that he chooses to show. But I see a kid that can be extremely grateful and is grateful—he just doesn’t know how to show that side without showing weakness. So this is the constantly evolving thing.

Callie’s willingness to learn from her students also teaches them the importance of allowing yourself to be open, humble, and to learn from others. Further, it contributes to the sense of rapport Callie has with her students and the respect that she shows them. Such rapport and respect contribute to a classroom environment that is imbued with trust.
Cultural identity. Callie’s sense of identity as a Newfoundlander has informed her professional decisions about employment, curriculum, and repertoire. When she first began her career, she was given the opportunity to teach in England, where she had completed her student teaching. While the allure of living overseas was appealing, Callie felt strongly that it was her place to return to Newfoundland and give back to the system that had provided her with her start in music education.

I did my student teaching in England, and I was asked to stay on there, but I felt it was my place to come back—because I came through a system that—the nun that taught us did not have a music degree—nobody did in those days, and they basically taught more from instinct than training, and we were the first group that was coming out with the music degree, and I felt that if one thing King instilled in us it was that we were Newfoundlanders and that it was really important for us to give back . . . But I would have done that anyway.

Callie uses her position as a high school teacher to instil in teenagers a sense of pride in their cultural heritage. The sense of feeling second-best—or “less than”—that many Newfoundlanders carry has been passed down through generations, and it can be a challenging task to work against a sense of hardship that has become part of Newfoundlanders’ collective memory (Delisle, 2008).

I have some issues with the fact that we always place ourselves second. We always undermine what we do. I think that that’s part of being Irish—I think that the Irish were always the down-trodden, and Newfoundland is the nation’s joke, still, and rising above that is really hard, and getting kids not to apologize for themselves, particularly at high school [is really hard].

Until the mid-1990s, Cultural Heritage 1200, a combination of Newfoundland history, geography, and folklore, was a required course in Newfoundland’s grade 10 curriculum. In addition to teaching music and theatre arts at Bishop O’Neill, Callie also
taught “Cultural Heritage,” which she used as an opportunity to ensure that everyone who
passed through her class would leave being able to sing the “Ode to Newfoundland,”
Newfoundland and Labrador’s provincial anthem.7

I taught “Cultural Heritage” at Bishop O’Neill, which I loved teaching. If there
was one course outside of music that I’d love to do, it’s that. And I would make
them sing the “Ode to Newfoundland” everyday. And they’d stand there and
they’d lean on the desks, and I’d say, “Get the hands off the desks—hands by your
sides. If you were in the United States of America, you’d have your hand on your
heart, reciting the ‘Pledge of Allegiance,’ so you’re going to sing the ‘Ode to
Newfoundland,’ and you’re not leaning on the desk. But I still meet kids now who
say, “I still know the ‘Ode to Newfoundland,’” and I say, “Good, that’s what it
was about.” I make them do that because I believe we need to be proud of where
we’re from, and I just find with high school kids that they don’t embrace that
enough. They don’t realize that individuality is a good thing, but that’s also
because of where they are. High school kids don’t want to be individuals.

Callie strongly believes that her students need to develop their identities as
Newfoundlanders with an understanding of the social and cultural conditions that shape
that identity. In 1992, the federal government placed a moratorium on the cod fishery in
Newfoundland, in response to the severe depletion of the cod stocks. It had a devastating
impact on the livelihoods of more than 35 000 Newfoundlanders, the economy of the
province as a whole, and the morale of Newfoundlanders in general. The effects of the
moratorium were so widespread that even those who had never fished for business or for
pleasure suddenly became aware of the vulnerabilities that come along with living on an

7 The “Ode to Newfoundland” was composed in 1902 and adopted as Newfoundland’s national anthem in
1904, forty-five years prior to confederation with Canada. In 1980, decades after joining confederation, the
“Ode” was adopted as the official provincial anthem. To date, Newfoundland and Labrador is the only
Canadian province to have an official anthem. The “Ode to Newfoundland” is sung at almost any event at
which “O Canada” is sung, and sometimes on its own, without the national anthem at all.
island in the middle of the North Atlantic Ocean. Through a performance at Carnegie Hall in New York City, the chamber choir from Bishop O’Neill was able to share the story of the moratorium with people from all across Canada, as well as the United States, and develop an understanding of how a sense of place can have a profound impact on cultural identity.

*In 1995, we took the choir at Bishop O’Neill to this [Canadian] choral celebration at Carnegie Hall, and the moratorium had just happened in 1992. We started with “I’se da B’y,” with the whole tap dance—we did fiddle, bass, bodhran, the whole works. And then the second song we did was “Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary’s,” and the introduction that went with it started off with, “It is often said that who we are is determined by where we live,” or something like that, and it talked about our island identity, and the power of the ocean, and how that defines us as island people and like living with its majesty and its fear and all of that, and then we sang “Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary’s.” [After that] we talked about the moratorium and the fishery and about the legacy of fathers passing on the training in the fishery to their sons, and what had happened to them with the moratorium, and we sang a beautiful arrangement of “Will We Lie There Evermore.” Then we ended it by saying that our last song is “We Rise Again,” which is Nova Scotian, but we talked about the indelible spirit of Newfoundlanders and that from this tragedy we would come back and that we would redefine ourselves, and that we were a people that were born of that kind of tenacity, and when we finished doing “We Rise Again,” the whole audience was in tears. The only standing ovation for that entire choral festival was the little Bishop O’Neill choir, and I think it was because they sang passionately about their home. I think it was only when we got there, on that stage and were singing it that those kids really got that sense of place, and that this is who we are, this defines us, and we need to be proud of that, you know . . . It’s something that was an earth-shattering experience for our kids because they never realized how much*
They had to tell and how much people embrace that story. So, it was pretty profound for us.

As a result of the cod moratorium, thousands of Newfoundlanders have left the province to find employment elsewhere. Unofficially, Fort McMurray has become known as “Newfoundland West” (Ferguson, 2005), given the dense population of Newfoundlanders who have moved there for jobs in the oil industry. As the moratorium had the most devastating effects on outports and rural areas of Newfoundland, teenagers in St. John’s have not necessarily realized the lasting effects of the moratorium. Over 10 years later, Callie worked to ensure that her students at St. Ignatius would understand that their collective identity as Newfoundlanders is informed by events that affect the province as a whole.

I am a very, very passionate Newfoundlander, and as a result of that, we always do—like last year we did one of Ged Blackmore’s pieces called “Newfoundland People, Salt Sea.” I don’t know if you know that one. It is so gorgeous. And you know, when you’re dealing with city kids all the time, they don’t understand that whole other identity. When you’re in the east end of St. John’s, they don’t understand that there is a whole other identity of us as Newfoundlanders. Pick any outport of Newfoundland, and every little place there has been an identity around the fishery for a long time, and how does that feel to be looking at redefining that now? So, we did a lot of research into—we had a lot of newspaper articles, and a lot of stuff at that point was about the Harbour Breton fishery—the fishplant and all of the people moving onto Fort McMurray. Every time there was something in the paper, I would bring it in and put it on the bulletin board. And I just kept giving them all this information so that when they sang something they’d

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Lyrics of the chorus: “Oh, Newfoundland people, where will you go? What will you do to hold free? The white squalls still beckon; the foghorns still blow. Oh, Newfoundland people, salt sea.” (Myrtle Power, lyrics; Ged Blackmore, music)
identify with what it meant to us. It wasn’t just songs, it wasn’t just lip service; it was an understanding of the culture. That’s big for me.

While there is no denying Callie’s passion for directing school musicals, it is telling that the lone artifact she chose to share with me during our time together was a CD of Newfoundland music that choral and strings students at Bishop O’Neill recorded in the final year Callie taught at the school. Entitled Passage, through carefully selected Newfoundland songs, the recording traces the story of Newfoundland’s Irish heritage, from the initial voyage of Irish settlers to the establishment of the fishery to its demise and a renewed sense of hope in the youth of the province. This artifact represents Callie’s pride as a Newfoundlander and her pride in her students. When she handed me a copy of the CD, I knew that she was not simply handing me the story of Newfoundland, but part of the story of who she is as well.

**Knowledge of self: Summary.** Callie’s beliefs in destiny and the cyclical nature of life, her commitments to lifelong learning and to learning from students, and her understanding of her cultural identity as a Newfoundlander inform her professional knowledge in various ways. Callie’s belief in destiny and her belief that everything comes full circle inform her understanding of how she found her career path, and they inform the life lessons she passes onto her students. Her understanding of herself as a learner informs her belief that good teaching depends on a willingness to be constantly learning. Her understanding of her cultural identity as a Newfoundlander has informed decisions she has made about her career path, and it informs her decisions about curriculum, repertoire, and her commitment to instilling a sense of cultural identity and pride within her students.
Knowledge of Teaching Role

Callie’s knowledge of her role as a teacher entails understanding who her learners are and working to support them. In terms of learners, Callie firmly believes in the principle of teaching to all; she understands that adolescents have particular social development needs; and she understands that teaching boys is a specialty in and of itself. In terms of working to support her learners, Callie strives to make a difference in the lives of her students, and she aims to instil in her students a lifelong desire to engage in music.

Teaching to all. Callie learned valuable lessons about the importance of understanding your students in order to meet the needs of all learners when she moved to St. Benedict, a school that had both French Immersion and English streams. The French immersion students, in general, came from a different social demographic than the English children. The French immersion students were more financially privileged than the English students, and, in general, their parents were able to be more engaged with the students’ day-to-day learning. There was a great disparity between the literacy of the French immersion students and the English students. Callie quickly learned that the needs of the students determined what the curriculum would look like.

French immersion was a completely different experience. You taught music to kids who came from fabulous backgrounds—academic backgrounds; the kids in immersion were really pushed to do well. And the English kids in that same school, English was immersion for those kids—and poorest of the poor. And you know, finding common ground between them, from a curriculum base, was a huge discovery. So that was a real eye-opener for me—to see that—and I’m glad I did. I’m glad that I saw that Kodály does not work on the same page and the same chapter every month, like we were told it did. It was very interesting.
Through her career, Callie has learned that diversifying teaching strategies not only benefits students, but leads to professional growth as a teacher as well.

*Kids learn in different ways, and how a light goes on—it’s—it’s about developing your craft as a teacher. If you can only teach one way, then you are not a teacher. You have to learn how to meet all of them, how to teach all of them, [and] you learn so much from doing that.*

As a student at Sacred Redeemer, Callie was aware that there was a divide between the students who were involved with the choir and musicals and those who were not. In her own teaching practice at the elementary level, she endeavoured to involve all students in the musicals, whether they sang in the choir or not. She also worked to involve students who faced challenges in their personal lives and at school, so that they would have a positive school-based experience.

*When we did “Christmas on Angel Street” [at Holy Rosary], there was a boy that had come from a really desperate family situation—two alcoholic parents, always in trouble in school and this kind of thing. But he had a gorgeous little singing voice. He was in grade six, but he couldn’t read to save his life. In those days, this particular show was on a record, so I taped it off on my little tape recorder, and I said, “Why don’t you take this home and have a listen to it, because we’re going to do auditions in two weeks, and I’d really like you to be in this.” So he came back [with] the entire thing memorized because he was an auditory learner. But because he got so frustrated in class all the time, he was constantly getting in trouble with teachers. Anyway, I cast him as the lead of the show, and we were doing great, until he got in a bit of an argument with a teacher. She went to the administration of the school and said, “I want him taken out of this musical—he shouldn’t be allowed to have extra-curricular activities if he can’t behave himself in class.” Then the administration—a nun—came to me and said, “Well he was really defiant—I think we have to take him out of it.” And I said, “You know, you can’t, you cannot take this child out of this musical…” I said, “Look, I will
close the show down if you take [him] out of it; I [won’t do] the show at all. And then you can explain to those parents why their kids have been in all these rehearsals and now the show is not going ahead.” And I really stood my ground, and there was one sort of argument, that I was having with this nun when I think some of the kids heard a little bit of my tone. I was like “Nope. I’m not bending. I’m sorry, I’m not bending.”

As a second-year teacher, Callie was proud to have stood her ground: in the end, the musical went ahead as planned, without any cast changes.

Through her varied teaching experiences, Callie has learned the value of challenging students wherever they are, stimulating their learning by keeping them motivated to work towards personal excellence.

The ensembles we teach—people will take different things away, and you never know what they are going to take away, but our challenge is to bring it to the greatest depths and heights as we can by challenging them as much, academically and mentally, to reach for the heights.

In learning to teach to all students, Callie discovered that being a music teacher is not solely about teaching music. During her time at St. Benedict, Callie learned that some students would need further attention on literacy; at Holy Rosary, she learned that some students would need positive experiences to help develop their self-esteem; throughout her entire career, she has learned that students need different things based on their prior knowledge and experiences at home and in school. The common denominator for teaching all students is to challenge everyone to strive for personal excellence.

Teaching adolescents. Throughout her career, Callie has taught music at all grade levels, from Kindergarten through grade 12. As she has spent most of her career in a junior or senior high school setting, Callie has come to understand adolescents in such a
way that they learn life lessons through her program, and they are proud to be members of her program.

One of the life lessons Callie never fails to address relates to ego. She recognizes that teenagers can be very self-involved, and she works to address that with them so that they will give more thought to their place in the world. For Callie, it is a life lesson she learned from the nuns when she was a high school student.

*You keep these kids real, and you keep them from getting the ego. You’re constantly having to pull the rug out from under them and say, “I think that’s a little bit of an attitude there—there’s always going to be someone better than you”—making them cognizant of the fact that the world does not revolve around them. And that’s the nun in me—we were never allowed to do that.*

Observing choral and band festivals across North America, you will see one ensemble after the other wearing white blouses and dress shirts with long black skirts and pants as their uniform. It is an easy and relatively inexpensive way to boost the professional look of an ensemble. Callie believes teachers need to take the uniform a step further by adding something special to the uniform, something that makes the group look different than any other, something that contributes to their identity as an ensemble. In addition, Callie recognizes that teenagers, generally speaking, are concerned about their appearances. She wants to ensure that her groups wear a uniform that they will be proud to be seen in.

*Kids need to be seen in a uniform—there’s a pride that goes with that. Just saying, “Wear white and black,” doesn’t cut it, because [that’s not] their idea of what attractive is. You need to have a uniform that they feel proud to wear. That’s why I love the ideas of the tuxedos. They—the guys like wearing the tuxedos. They think that they look good, and they do look good. Do something that, even if it’s a funky kind of look, do something that says, “This is what we wear,” because*
that’s a part of it too, the ownership of the ensemble, you know, and I’ve found a big difference since we’ve gone out and [bought] these dresses. I know that they like wearing them, and I know that they know that they look good in them, and then people say that they look good. That’s part of it—image—it’s important to them at their age.

While not necessarily specific to teaching adolescents, Callie recognizes the importance of enabling her students to feel good about themselves as choral singers early on in the year. This is important, not only for their individual self-esteem and confidence, but for the sense of community that can be created within a choir. Callie is careful to select repertoire that sounds good, but is not technically difficult, so they will recognize the potential of the group and believe they can succeed. As the year progresses and they grapple with more challenging repertoire, Callie continues to add easier pieces to the mix so that they will not lose sight of the potential of the group to be successful.

I think that when a choir starts, they need to sound good on something early so that they have pride in their ensemble. Especially when you have grade 10s coming in, you need them to feel like, “Wow, we’re gonna be good; we’re gonna sound good!” That’s important to get. I don’t want to go too far into the year where they feel like, “It’s a struggle, it’s a struggle, it’s a struggle.” And then you can give them the more challenging stuff and keep tempering it with things they can sing easily and find success with.

Recognizing the social development needs of adolescent learners, Callie uses her role as a teacher to address the tendency of teenagers to be self-involved. She also bolsters their confidence by attending to their insecurities about image through careful selection of ensemble uniforms. Further, she nurtures their self-confidence by scaffolding their learning experiences, providing them with opportunities for guaranteed success as
individuals early in the year and challenging them in ways that boost their interest in working towards excellence as an ensemble throughout the year.

**Teaching boys.** Callie learned early in her career that boys are not necessarily drawn to the choral environment as readily as many girls are. Initially, she learned to engage boys in her music program through the school musical. Through the advice of more experienced teachers, her own experiences, and the help of shifts in societal attitudes, she eventually learned how to draw them into her choirs and get them to stay.

*That always plagues you as a teacher—how do you get them, and how do you keep them? But I think what’s helped a lot with Bishop O’Neill and St. Ignatius are two things. One, I think the musical has been a huge help in attracting boys and in keeping them, and [two], I think that society has changed. I think that the city of St. John’s is still a little bit better, not a little bit, a LOT better, in terms of getting the boys out for stuff. I think a lot of it has to do with community musicals too. Boys are afraid in that age group; they’re afraid of the stigma that’s attached to music, that says, “I’m somehow feminine, I’m somehow a geek,” and I think it needs to be presented to them in a way that says that they’re very manly in what they’re doing. I think that age feels very threatened—their sexuality is a huge issue for them, and much more so than it is for the girls. And I think you have to keep that intact, and that’s why the shows I choose always present guys in a real—I don’t want to say macho because that sounds—but in a real masculine light.*

Callie has come to understand that it is often necessary to teach boys differently than she teaches girls, but she reluctantly came to that understanding.

*I remember when I was at Bishop O’Neill, Brother Conroy said to me one time—I was really being a task master about something with the choir, and he said, “You gotta teach—you gotta treat the boys differently.” And I said, “Huh, like hell I will.” And he said, “You have to teach the boys differently or you won’t keep them. They learn differently, and you’ve got to be able to go with it.” And I was*
incensed first, because to me it said double-standard, but I don’t think so now. You do have to be different with them. You have to be a little bit lighter-hearted; you have to be able to change the pace a lot with them. Girls can sit for longer and stay at something for longer. They have a better attention span. It’s not that boys are any less smart, it’s just that the way they learn, their bodies need to be moving, so you need to keep things going like that.

Callie also realizes that teaching boys is a specialization in and of itself because of the intricacies of dealing with the changing voice. Dealing with the changing voice not only affects repertoire selection, but it affects teaching style as well. In order to keep boys in the choir through the voice change, it is important that they continue to feel good about their contributions, not feel embarrassed singing in the presence of the boys with changed voices and the girls, and believe that they can and will be successful. While Callie wants everyone in the choir to come together as a community, she works particularly hard to ensure that the boys in the choir form a bond amongst each other.

*Teaching guys is a skill. When you’re dealing with the changing voice, for example, in chamber choir, you’ve got boys whose voices are solid, and you’ve got boys who are really cambiata range—the top is gone, and the bottom is not there, and they don’t know what to do with it, and this kind of thing. Teaching that and keeping them feeling good about themselves with the guys there and everything is—I do a lot of—first when I do choir, I do a lot of sectional stuff with them so that the boys who are finding their voice are not finding it in front of a group of girls. So that’s the first thing that I do, and I make sure that the boys really bond together. I, in fact, make an issue of making the boys bond more than I do with the girls.*

While Callie pays special attention to the boys in order to bring them to where they need to be as confident and successful singers, she recognizes that girls have their own challenge in that the general public tends to be more drawn towards the sound of the
male voice. A group of boys does not need to be as polished with their performance as a group of girls to warm the hearts of an audience.

_I love the SSA sound because that’s what I started with. I love that. But there is nothing better than the guy sound. There is something gorgeous and warm and audience-pleasing. Audiences love to hear boys sing anything. They can sing the simplest arrangement and the audience is going, “God, they’re gorgeous.” And girls have to work twice as hard. It’s the truth._

Through experience and the advice of colleagues, Callie has learned that boys and girls have different learning needs. In the music context, it appears that boys may even have special learning needs. Callie has learned that in order to maintain boys’ interest in participating in school musicals, it is important to be sensitive to their insecurities about perceptions of their sexuality. She is careful to select musicals that portray male characters in a masculine light, and she works with a local choreographer who is also attentive to the social development of adolescent boys. Though she resisted for many years, Callie experienced a breakthrough teaching boys when she began to understand that boys, in general, have a different learning style than girls. She has learned to differentiate instruction for boys and girls. Finally, Callie has learned to be particularly sensitive to the voice change that boys experience. Aside from addressing the physiological complexities of the voice change, Callie has found it to be just as—or even more—important to attend to the social aspects of the changing voice. Callie pays special attention to creating a supportive sense of community among the boys in her choral program.

**Making a difference.** One of Callie’s goals as an educator is to make a positive difference in the lives of her students, a goal that can be difficult to assess without direct
feedback from students. Fortunately for Callie, she has received such feedback on occasion, and that acknowledgement of success has been more gratifying than any music award in her career.

When you know that you’ve made an impact on their life, that has its own rewards beyond performance. I’ll give you a case in point: Just a couple of years ago, [CBC Radio] did this thing on [one of my former students], who has been successful on Broadway, and she [referenced me as her mentor]. Sometime later, I got this e-mail from University of Cleveland—from a young guy that I had taught at Holy Rosary back in the day. And he started it off by saying “You probably don’t remember me, but I was in one of your musicals, ‘Christmas on Angel Street.’” And he said, “I just wanted to tell you that you were my hero.” He never ever said anything in those days, but how many years later? That was in 1980, and he writes to me [over 20 years later] and says, “You were my hero because you defended this kid.” He said, “I remember seeing his mother and the tears in her eyes.” Now he never would have said that at that age, and I wouldn’t have known that he saw, but he saw . . . Now see, that’s worth a million dollars. Those are the stories you wait for, when out of nowhere, you find out that somebody was moved by something that you [did].

Callie has discovered on more than one occasion that the difference she has made in her students’ lives has happened in ways that she was either never aware of or may have simply taken for granted. The reminder that even the smallest actions can have a tremendous impact sustains her commitment to caring for her students.

[With my jazz choirs], I got to do lots of really neat things with national festivals and work with people like Phil Mattson and Michele Weir and Ward Swingle of “Swingle Sisters.” I did lots of great and awesome things with jazz educators, and I can say, “Wow, I worked with him, I worked with him.” But in the end, that isn’t

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9 He goes on to reference the story, cited previously in the section, “Teaching to all,” about the boy who had almost lost the opportunity to perform the lead in “Christmas on Angel Street” because of his behaviour in his other classes.
as important as the little insignificant things that you never even knew that happened. I remember when Nadine went away to do her opera diploma—it must be a seven-page letter I have sitting in my piano stool, from her. She would come for a half-hour lesson and it [turned into] two hours, three hours, whatever. We just had a great rapport like that. But you know, when someone writes a letter and says [thanks] . . . You know, that’s all you need. You don’t need gold medals or certificates. You just need someone to say, “Thanks.” That’s me—that’s all I need. That doesn’t sound very profound [laughs]. And it’s funny because people look at me as being a big personality because I’m [such a talker]! You’d be surprised at the things that are more important to me. But life teaches you that.

Not only does Callie want to make a difference in the lives of her students, but she hopes to provide them with whatever they need to be able to pursue their professional dreams. Specifically, Callie strives to create a musical theatre program at her school that gives those students who wish to go further the foundations they will need to be successful in a post-secondary musical theatre program. Some of Callie’s students have gone on to find success at Sheridan College, the Shaw Festival, and even Broadway. It is rewarding for Callie to know that her program contributed to their foundational knowledge and experiences in musical theatre.

It’s nice that a lot of the kids in this school have an interest in [musical theatre] and going on [to study] that. You can’t decide whether they’re going to make a success of it, because that whole performance thing is a question mark anyway, but I can wrap the musical theatre program here around them and say, “I want it to be everything you need to do to get into that school and then some.”

As an elementary school student, Callie observed the dedication of Sister Anita and was inspired by her commitment to excellence. It is that commitment that Callie endeavours to bring to her students as she encourages their pursuit of excellence. When
Callie brings her choirs to perform for the nuns, she takes the opportunity to share the source of her inspiration with her students.

*And then I would say in front of the nuns, and I would say to the choir, “If it wasn’t for her inspiration and her drive . . . Now, you think I drive you hard? Now, that woman there—you have no idea!”*

Callie’s desire to make a difference in the lives of her students does not come from any sense of wanting to redeem her students from hardship, and it does not come from any sense of ego-centricity. Instead, Callie wants to do her best to be a positive role model for her students and to provide them with learning experiences that are worthwhile—experiences that make a difference years later, and not simply in the moment. Callie saw Sister Anita work tirelessly for her students, and in the spirit of giving back, Callie endeavours to do the same.

**Opening doors to a life with music.** While Callie works to support the dreams of her students who wish to pursue careers in music, Callie recognizes that those students are in the minority. More than anything, Callie hopes that through her program, she can provide all of her students with opportunities that will inspire them to continue to engage with music throughout their lives, as amateur musicians, professional musicians, or even as supporters of the arts. Aside from directing the choral and musical theatre programs at her school, Callie also teaches a number of courses, including Applied Music (Vocal) 2206/3206. One of the main skills that Callie focuses on in this course is accompanying on the piano, so that students learn to read basic chords and play simple accompaniments to songs that they sing. Callie approaches the course in this way for two reasons. The first is that she entered music school, having spent her lifetime taking piano lessons, without the ability to improvise accompaniments and play by chords—she could only play
notated music—and she felt this was a significant gap in her musicianship. The second, and most important, reason is so that her students leave her course with a skill that they can hold onto for life—that they can walk away from her class and always be able to play music for enjoyment. She enables her students to develop a skill that will continue to be useful to them throughout their lives without having to pursue a career in music.

*Most of these kids won’t go on in music. But, they can take any fake book or any folksong book, or they can take any book that you’d get at [a music store], and they can sit down, and they can play accompaniments for themselves even though they’re not pianists. And if these kids come out of my class, sitting down and playing piano and singing more than they ever did before, then that’s all I need to do. I just need to give them the tools to go ahead. And I’ve had a number of parents say to me this year, “Oh my god, I can’t get my kid away from the piano.” And I’m thinking, “Thank you, lord!”*

Throughout her career, Callie has come to appreciate the value of providing students with an opportunity to have a positive choral experience. She sees it as a gateway to building a community of lifelong supporters of music, whether or not they choose careers in music. The school concert choir, which is a four-part mixed choir, provides such an opportunity. While Callie had wonderful experiences with girls’ choirs earlier in her career, she has shifted her priorities towards the mixed choir to provide both girls and boys with a choral experience.

*I really feel like that I’d never go back to SSA [a girls’ choir] in a school situation, not for anything, because I love the idea that when they [girls and boys] leave, if they never ever do music again, that they’ve had that experience of being in a choir. I want [all] the kids to have that because I’m not one of these people who pushes people into music. I probably did that earlier in my life, but I don’t do it now because I really feel like we need as many of those people out there who are supporters of music and who are the financial backing that the artists will*
need. And that appreciation comes from being in an ensemble like that in high school, and not just loving the camaraderie of it, and the audience and the shows and that kind of thing, but loving the work and taking pride in the work, and I really think that that sense of accomplishment is huge.

While Callie does not push her students into musical careers, she is attentive to musical potential. She does want to let students know that there are professional musical opportunities beyond high school, so she pays particular attention to the musical interests and potential of incoming students. If students were involved in their junior high music programs, she works to ensure they continue participating in music throughout high school.

I always get the list [of music students] in June from [the junior high teachers], and if [those students] don’t turn up at my door, then I do go looking for them and say, “Now, I hear you’re musical . . .” There was one boy in particular—a girl here, who had come from St. Aidan’s, told me that he sang. I said, “Really?” She said, “Yeah Miss, like he doesn’t sing serious. He sings foolin’ around, but it’s a really nice voice . . .” And I said, “Really? Well now, I’ll have to look for him” I went up to [his] classroom, and I said, “Could I see you for a minute please?” I brought him down [to the music room], and I said, “Now I need you to sing ‘O Canada’ for me.” And he said, “I really don’t want to do this.” I said, “I know you don’t want to do it, but let’s just get it done.” So I said, “Here’s what you can do. You can face the window, and I’ll face the wall, and you just sing to the window. I just need to hear it; I don’t need to see you.” Anyway, he started to sing, and it was a voice like Josh Groban. I went, “Oh my god.” He said, “I told you. I told you I couldn’t sing.” And I said, “No honey, I’m not saying ‘Oh my god’ because of that. I’m saying ‘Oh my god,’ because you have a beautiful voice, and you need to do something about this.” I phoned [his mother], and I said, “You HAVE to get him in lessons.” She said, “I always thought he could sing, but nobody ever listened to me.” I said, “No, you really need to get this guy singing because I have rarely, if ever, come across a voice this natural.” And now he’s a
Callie’s understanding of her role as a teacher includes providing all of her students with positive experiences with music that will set them up to be lifelong musicians, or at the very least, lifelong supporters of music. Callie teaches all students in her Applied Vocal Music class to read chord symbols and play simple accompaniments to songs. This skill will enable her students to be able to “play music” throughout their lives. For those students who participate in Callie’s choirs, she strives to provide positive learning experiences that will leave a lasting impact, fostering lifetime engagement with music. Callie also reaches out to those students who may not realize how much musical potential they have. To pursue music at the university level, an entrance audition is required. Rarely would a student be prepared for such an audition without private instruction outside of the school context. Callie seeks out students who she believes have the potential to pursue music degrees, not to force them into a career in music, but to ensure they know they could have that option.

**Knowledge of teaching role: Summary.** Callie knows that her role as a teacher entails much more than teaching music. She knows that she needs to understand who her students are, and she strives to meet their individual learning needs. Through her experiences as an elementary school student and her diverse experiences as a teacher, she has developed a commitment to working towards a principle of teaching to all. In her current teaching context, her understanding of the psycho-social development of
adolescents in general, and of boys in particular, informs her teaching practice. As she works to meet the immediate learning needs of her students, Callie knows that she must also attend to her students’ future needs. Understanding this, Callie strives to make a difference in the lives of her students by providing experiences that will be worthwhile to their lives beyond her classroom; she works to support the professional aspirations of her students; and she works to prepare her students for lifelong engagement with music.

**Knowledge of Teaching Choral Music**

While many aspects of musical knowledge contribute to Callie’s understanding of how to teach choral music, two particular aspects of this knowledge emerged through our interviews. First, Callie approaches her choral rehearsals with the understanding that expressive communication of text is integral to successful choral music performance. Second, Callie’s knowledge of successful choral teaching is dependent upon the use of images and analogies to increase musical understanding.

**Communication of text.** As a young musician at Sacred Redeemer, Callie learned the importance of musical expression, and in the context of choral singing, this included singing so that the meaning of the text was clear. This clarity came from an internalization or embodiment of the meaning of the lyrics of any choral piece. Students from Sacred Redeemer were known for being expressive singers, so it was not unusual that at the age of 13, Callie’s private voice teacher called upon her to coach another student in expression. The importance of textual and musical expression has remained a priority for Callie in her choral teaching.

*One of the things that I really, really emphasize here is lyrics and how important lyrics are and how important interpretation is. We just did two performances—we
had to sing for [a] workshop that we had yesterday, and there were completely
blah faces. Teenagers constantly have to be reminded of that, and they’re always
afraid of over-doing it. They’re always afraid of looking like a fool. So they’d
rather stand there and look like the face of death. I have to spend a lot of time
pulling that out of them and saying, “I need to see the light. I need to see you
understand. I need to see the lyrics are going in.” It’s a lot of work . . . [but] they
sing with much more—there’s such a brightness in their sound when they do that.

Musical expression takes priority over technical precision for Callie. If students
do not understand the meaning of the words they sing—and do not show that they
understand the meaning—then their performance is never truly musical. Callie stands
firmly by this belief, even though it contributed to tension with one of her professors in
the past. One particular incident with a professor arose over the praise of a choir at a
summer music program. While her professor did not appear to value the embodiment of
text as much as Callie did, this source of tension served to reinforce Callie’s commitment
to her position.

[He] brought me in one day to say, “Did you see such and such a group? Did you
see [that] group perform?” And I said, “Yes, I did.” He said, “They’re absolutely
fantastic.” And I said, “Yeah . . . a lot of really good stuff going on, but no
passion . . . nothing going on, like you know?” And he said, “Ah, well . . . But
they’re technically the best choir here.” And I said, “They are indeed, but do they
get it? Do they get the words? Do they? Because, what’s music if there’s no light
in their eyes?”

The primacy of text underpins Callie’s work with her theatre students as well. She
pushes them to imagine and explore the inner workings of a character through close study
of that character’s individual lines and dialogue. Callie came to recognize the importance
of characterization through her graduate work in theatre, but it is not difficult to make the
connection to her focus on the understanding and expression of lyrics in music.
I push them in terms of characterization and stuff because of that [master’s] program I did in [theatre]: “Find the reason. Why are you doing this? Why is your character . . . ?” Making them write about their characters—write bios about their characters. And “If you’re moving, why are you moving? If you’re moving on stage, why would your character move? Don’t do this unless there’s a motivation for this.” And it’s pretty awesome when you get to do that because I think it brings intelligence to the theatre. Now some of them don’t want it. Some of them are like, “Just tell me what to do, and I’ll do it,” and sometimes you have to do that, but for the kids that love the search, it’s such a high. It really is, and, and when they get it, and you know that they’re getting it, and you’re on the same page—I tell ya, there’s nothing better in the teaching business than “We’re all getting it,” you know?

When I observed Callie working with her chamber choir, she spent time addressing technical elements of singing, such as diction and vowel shapes, but her primary focus was consistently on the expression of the text. In one rehearsal, Callie reminded the ensemble, “It is your job to say, ‘I have to sing expressively.’” To support this request for expression, Callie’s conducting gestures were always highly emotive. Throughout her rehearsals, through short prompts, Callie never let the choir lose focus on the primacy of text: “You are ambassadors of the words. . . . You are the vessel for the text. . . . Connect your face to the words. . . . Let the words direct you forward” (field notes; October 19, 2007; November 26, 2007).

Teaching through images. When teaching music and drama, Callie places special emphasis on text and bringing her students to a place in which they fully understand the underlying meaning of the lyrics of a song or the motivations of a character in a play. Language plays another important role in Callie’s teaching as she makes use of images and analogies to teach vocal technique and to develop a common
understanding of the musical intentions of a choral work. While the use of analogies have been shown to be effective tools in the teaching of music (Buell, 1990), Callie’s use of figurative language to teach vocal technique met with resistance from one of her graduate professors. The words of Callie’s professor begin the following story.

“I guess you’re one of those people who teaches vocal technique by saying, ‘Oh, imagine there’s an orange in the back of your throat, and . . . imagine this, and imagine that the string from—you know.’” And I said, “Yeah.” And he said, “Singing is muscular. It’s a physiological change, and it’s muscular.” And I said, “And it’s mental.” And he said, “Ahm, no, it’s about muscular changes and teaching kids how muscular changes take place.” And I said, “Yes, and it’s about using images to get to that.” He said, “Teaching singing is about teaching physiological changes.” [But] it’s the melding of the two. I said, “I teach voice as well as teaching school, you know, that’s what I did—I’m a voice major. So I obviously teach technique. I don’t just teach all ‘Imagine you got a grapefruit in the back of your throat.’” When you’re just talking about physiological changes and musculature and all that, that’s a university level talk. Kids don’t get that at the elementary age. They don’t get it. They get, “Blow like a candle. Fill up like a balloon.” They get images that they can identify with and that they can make happen because they see it. They see it, and so they can make it. They image what that thing is, and they can make it happen in their body.”

Callie also relies on the use of images and analogies to bring her students to a shared and embodied understanding of the meaning of a piece of music. She has seen dramatic results by taking the lyrics of a piece of music and relating them to shared emotional experiences of her students’ everyday lives. Callie related a story about singing Daniel Gawthrup’s “Sing Me to Heaven” years earlier on a trip to Italy with one of her choirs from Bishop O’Neill.

_We were in—we had done this one at O’Neill back when we had gone to Rome. And one of the girls in the choir, Sarah, her mom was dying of cancer—her_
mother, Mary, was supposed to come and chaperone and was diagnosed in May. We went in October, and her mother had gone very, very downhill in that amount of time. We had a Thanksgiving—we were gone Thanksgiving weekend, so we had a Thanksgiving prayer service in a church in Assisi. Not the big St. Francis of Assisi church that everybody knows, but we found a very small church—our tour guide was phenomenal—found us this lovely small stone church, and we did a Thanksgiving ceremony just for us—just for us. Brother Gerald White and Brother Conroy were both with us on that. We had talked about it beforehand, and I had said, “Gerald, put something together, and we’ll, you know, frame it up with the music that we have.” And we did, and in the prayer service that we did, we were offering prayers of thanksgiving, but then we asked prayers for Mary because Sarah had been a part of the choir for so long. And then we just started to sing “Sing Me to Heaven,” and the choir fell apart, just fell apart, and Mary died two months later, and we sang at her funeral, and that’s what we sang, “Sing Me to Heaven.” And I think that when that choir sang it, they never sang as beautifully as when they sang in that church [in Assisi, with] no audience. And it was just so beautiful and so meaningful, and it was like everything that I had talked about in the lyrics before then just came together in that moment when it was just a song lifted to heaven for the right reason. That’s when music is in its essence, when you can just make—when every one of those chords aligns because we are—because we are intuitively in the right space.

Callie understands that language is a powerful tool for communication. Extending from her insistence on clear communication of the lyrics of a piece of choral music, Callie uses expressive language to teach technical aspects of vocal production, and she uses analogies to enhance students’ understanding of choral texts. During Callie’s rehearsals, I noted, “Conducting is very musical, but mostly gives verbal direction” (field notes; November 26, 2007). Callie is very comfortable with the use of language, and it permeates her approach to teaching choral music.
Knowledge of choral music: Summary. Callie’s knowledge of how to teach choral music is informed by a life’s worth of musical experiences, including her elementary schooling in music, which had a primary focus on musical expression. Drawing upon this knowledge, Callie approaches her choral rehearsals with the understanding that expressive communication of text is integral to successful choral music performance. Through her extensive career of teaching privately and in school settings, Callie has learned the power of using images and analogies as teaching tools. Callie knows that successful choral teaching is dependent upon the use of such figurative language to increase musical understanding.

Knowledge of the Choral Milieu

Callie knows that the choral milieu holds tremendous potential for memorable experiences. She draws upon her professional knowledge to make the most of shared experiences within an ensemble, and she works to take such shared experiences to a level of transformation, recognizing that musical experiences can take people to another place.

Significance of shared experiences. Callie draws upon the shared experiences of her students to enhance her teaching of the meaning of a text, as illustrated in the example using “Sing Me to Heaven,” but she also creates opportunities for shared experiences that will be memorable for her students so that they will bond together as an ensemble, take pride in their collective achievements, and have lasting positive impressions of their experiences with music.

Callie does not simply wait for the special moments to occur. While those moments will happen on their own, she also carefully crafts opportunities for them to emerge, as illustrated in another story about Daniel Gawthrop’s “Sing Me to Heaven,”
this time a recent rehearsal at St. Ignatius. Callie takes advantage of even the smallest musical moments to bring out the magic and hook her students on the feeling that they create together.

[When choosing repertoire.] I’ll pick something that has a wonderful, poetic text that I know will get them excited, and then we’ll work for the sound that the text needs. We’re doing “Sing Me to Heaven” now—the Gawthrup, and you know, it’s a little dense: “In my heart’s sequestered chamber lies truth stripped of poet’s gloss.” That’s not high school material. But, when I started it last week, I said, “I just love this piece. I love this piece.” Now when they’re singing it first, when they’re learning it, it doesn’t sound, it doesn’t have that magic . . . So anyway, we started to sing it, and I said, “I don’t even want to get into the harmonies; I just want to sing the opening line. I want to sing that opening line in unison and feel where this is.” And the boys were downstairs doing a sectional at that time, so I said, “Just us, now girls—in my heart’s sequestered chamber, lies truth stripped of poet’s gloss,” and I said, “Just sing that much.” And they did, and I said, “That’s all we’ll sing of it today. We’ll just leave it right there where it’s very precious, and we’ll get back to it later.” And those are the lovely, lovely moments. And I know now that when we find “and wraps me in song” the first chord in that, “and WRAPS me in song” where that chordal line sets, that VI chord—it’s just euphoria. And I said, “Now, when the guys get a chance to go over their parts, we can line up that chord and just sing, “and wraps me in song.” And then sometimes what I’ll do is not finish a line, but I’ll say—they’ll get to something like that where it’s a chord that’s beautiful, and I’ll say, “Okay, that’s all.” And they’re like, “WHAT?!? We gotta go on!” and I’ll say, “Not now. Right now, we just leave it right where the magic is. Let’s not try for anymore. Just where the magic is.” And then you have them chomping to do more. And that’s—that’s all we need because—like I said, some of them will go on in music, and some of them won’t, but for all of them, they need a time when it’s special. They’ll be part of that moment, and that’s as precious as it can get.
Callie acknowledges that most of her students will not pursue a career in music, but she hopes that memories of positive experiences in her ensembles will inspire them to remain involved with music, or at the very least to become lifelong supporters of music.

**Transformation.** Beyond meaningful shared experiences, Callie works to provide her students with transformative experiences that “lift them to another place,” which, she has discovered, often take place when there is no audience at all. Early in Callie’s musical life, she learned, firsthand, about the spiritual and transformative potential that music holds.

_I remember singing a piece of music called “Eternal Life,” and it was the prayer of St. Francis, “Lord, Make Me an Instrument of Thy Peace,” and it was this gorgeous SSA arrangement . . . And I remember thinking when we were singing, “It doesn’t get any better than this.” I just—listening to this music—and being on an inside part, which is just the most gorgeous place to be. It’s just like being in a sandwich, you know, and when you’re on second soprano, and you’ve got the soprano on top and the alto [underneath], and the chords are right, and the music is just ethereal, you don’t need any more than that. And that was for me—discovering that—I was probably in grade four or five when we did that one, and thinking, “This is incredible. This is all you need in your life now. You just need to sound like this.” And, you know, there is a quote that I read from—that I just love—and it says, “Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.” And those things that I remember from my musical training, the moments that take your breath away, if you give that to students—and they’re fleeting. They are fleeting and certainly they’re not there every day, that’s for damn sure—but when they happen, I tell you, that makes up for any 90s or first places or gold awards or anything. And they often happen—I—my personal feeling is that they’ll often happen when there’s no audience. When that is like an ultimate connection, it is not always based on the applause that you get. [Though] sometimes it is; sometimes it is that.
Callie was reminded of music’s power to transform during a summer of doctoral study, when she was singing in an all-campus choir. Nearing performance time, the choir’s repertoire was not as finely tuned as Callie would have liked. The choir’s director, Robert Fountain, acknowledged that while the performance would not be completely polished, a greater accomplishment may have been reached in their time together.

_He said, “Within this choir, there are a lot of people that bring a lot of heartache to the rehearsal—we don’t know what goes on in their lives. But, if for the hour or the hour and a half that we practice here, they can think about something different, and think about only the music, then we’ve done what we’re supposed to do.” And he said, “Our purpose on this earth is to lift people to a different place, and that is our sole purpose in that concert.” And then I realized, “You know, he is right.” I mean we do push and we challenge, and we make things as good as they can be, but if in the end it isn’t perfect, but people have been raised up to a different place, isn’t that what it’s supposed to be?_

This lesson from Fountain remained with her as she directed one of her favourite musicals, _Man of La Mancha_, at Bishop O’Neill. In the musical, the lead character, Cervantes, delivers a monologue that reinforces Callie’s belief in the fundamental purpose of the arts: that they lift us to a higher place. The following story illustrates how Callie worked with the student who was playing Cervantes to bring that message to the audience.

_It was a Saturday night, sitting in the music room, and we were trying to find the reason behind this whole monologue, and it is the crux of the show. The Duke refers to Cervantes as a mad man. He says, “Why are you—why are you poets just obsessed with what isn’t there? You’re all madmen because you don’t believe in reality.” And then Cervantes says, “What is reality? What’s real, and what isn’t? Like, what is life?” The Duke says, “You need to see life as it is.” And then [Cervantes] says, “You know, if we see life as it is, is that what life is? If not, why_
can’t our life be our dreams? And if our dreams lift us to a different place, are we not better for that? Do we need to see life as it is or life as it ought to be?” Paul, [who played Cervantes], was sitting against a post, and he’d do it, and I’d say, “No, I don’t believe it,” and he’d do it again, and I’d say, “No, I don’t believe it.” And it was just because at first it was words, and it wasn’t until that whole thing was completely, completely internalized, and there was like a moment, probably at about 10:30 at night, where it actually—I don’t know maybe I was just exhausted—it just felt like he finally embodied that whole thing because that was the whole purpose of . . . Now, probably only one fraction of the audience got how important that was, but it was important for me to know that he understood it and that he embodied the character because in that moment, on that page of script, it was what that character was about and, and really what we are about as artists and what we do to lift you to another place.

While Callie learned that music could lift you to a higher place when she was a young child, it has taken reminders, such as the words of Robert Fountain and of Cervantes in *Man of La Mancha*, to bring her back to that powerful childhood experience and continue to place that belief at the fore in her choral rehearsals.

The following story illustrates an example of how Callie used an analogy for a shared experience among the students in the Chamber Choir at St. Ignatius to provide a catalyst for a transformative experience while rehearsing Kinley Lange’s “Esto les Digo.”

*We were working on a piece called “Esto les Digo,” a beautiful piece of music, and it means, “It is said.” And it continues, “Where two or more are gathered in His name, there am I in their midst.” Anyway, we did this piece, and there’s a lot of nice major and minor seconds and mush and stuff like that, and we learned it, and it was there in the notes, but not [fully] there . . . I kept trying to get them to find the phrasing that worked and, and it was all sort of technical and mechanical, but no sense of really singing the music. I knew what I wanted—I knew what I wanted it to be, and it was kind of like a recipe that had the salt and pepper, but you just knew it needed more, and you’re thinking, “How do I get to*
that? What—how do I break down that wall?” And there were some things that you feel like, okay if this were in the olden days with the Catholic school system, you might connect with that on a different level and feel free to talk about it. Anyway, I went into rehearsal, and I just said, “Okay, I want to work on ‘Esto les Digo,’ but we’re all just going to sit down now—sit down on the floor.” So I turned off all the lights, and I started. This was Easter week, actually, and we were [set to perform] at MusicFest the week afterwards. And some child in the school, I can’t even remember who it was now, had—her family had transferred to Ontario. The father got a new job and left in the middle of the year. It was all very dramatic, like high school kids can do very well. And, so I used that as a kind of—I used it as a kind of image for talking about Jesus Christ leaving the disciples, and saying to them, “I have to go,” and—and all of them saying, “What? You know, you didn’t tell us this before. Why are we finding this out now?” And I talked about this girl who had moved away, and I kept bringing the parallels back and forth, like when your best friend leaves and you feel like everything’s going to change, everything’s going to be different. It’s not going to be the same without her here. She was the life of the party, she was all that, and I kept bringing that back and forth, and then saying to them, “This is what it was like for Jesus and his disciples because he was their leader. He did everything with them—socially, everything, and now he’s saying, ‘I’m going,’ and they’re saying, ‘But how can you do this? How can you do this without—’ But he says, ‘Where two or more of you are gathered, then I am there.’” And I said, “When you think of your friend, you think, well when you’re all there together, you’re thinking, ‘Oh remember the time we did this? Remember when Kelly did that?’ Then you think, ‘She’s here; she’s with us.’” So I said, “Now take it to this level, and use this and see Jesus in this light, and see his friends saying, ‘You know, I didn’t see this coming, but think, ‘Wherever I am, wherever you are, then I’m there,’ and you just kind of open your mind . . . And now, sing.” I said, “Close your eyes; we don’t need direction; follow each other.” It was the most fantastic moment, and then I knew I had them. I knew I had them where I wanted them . . . When we finished that, nobody spoke. Nobody spoke, and then one of the boys
went, “That was awesome.” Now, those are the moments that take our breath away, and they’re the ones that really work. Now, you know when that happened in that room, there was no audience there, and there didn’t need to be because those kids will remember that image forever. Forever . . . That’s my reason for teaching right there, in those moments that never reach the stage.

Callie does not deny the importance of working towards technical excellence to bring music to a high standard of performance, but the enduring understanding that she hopes all of her students will take away is that the feelings that transformative experiences in music can elicit reach a level that no applause from an audience will surpass.

**Knowledge of the choral milieu: Summary.** Callie’s knowledge of the choral milieu is rooted in her experiences as an elementary school student and has developed through her work with many choirs throughout her career. She has learned that making the most of shared experiences not only enhances the choral experience in general, but provides students with lasting positive impressions of music, impressions that she hopes will persuade them to maintain a lifelong engagement with music. Further, Callie knows that music has the potential to be transformative. While these moments may happen on an individual level, she works to craft opportunities where they are likely to emerge on a collective level. This is important to Callie as she believes the underlying purpose of the arts is to “lift you to another place.”

**Core Values**

Callie’s knowledge of herself, of her teaching role, of teaching choral music, and of the choral milieu are integral components of her professional knowledge as a choral music educator. In order to better understand Callie’s professional knowledge, it is also
necessary to explore the core values that inform how her professional knowledge gets put into practice. Throughout our interviews, Callie often spoke of the importance of hard work, of reaching for your personal best, and of process over product. While closely related to Callie’s understanding of her role as a teacher, these values are inextricably intertwined with the values she expects her students to bring to the classroom and rehearsal space as learners.

**Hard work.** The main focus of Callie’s teaching is the actual process of learning a piece of music and building a sense of unity as an ensemble, and her approach is rooted in hard work and discipline. This aspect of her teaching is grounded in her experiences with Sister Anita.

*She drilled, and drilled and drilled, but the end product was very beautiful. I mean it was—you know—we had to sound like angels—[we] weren’t getting on that stage unless we sounded like angels . . . And we rehearsed things like walking on the stage, walking off, and deportment, and posture was a huge issue with her, and expression was, you know, an obsession with her, to the point that—ah—I know I get it from her in that way.*

Callie recognizes her attention to discipline in her teaching.

*I’m strict with them in that, like for example, when we’re doing choir, I expect that they sit straight. I expect that they don’t sit with their legs crossed, and I’m constantly driving that and constantly reminding of that kind of thing. And one of the things that I’ve really got to work on is that I forget to give breaks because I get taken up with what I’m doing, and I forget to say, “Geez, they need a 10-minute break.” I don’t build it in that at a certain time we’re going to do that because I always want to say, “At the end of this song,” and then sometimes the end of the song doesn’t come, so I’m really bad at that.*
Much like the way Sister Anita would drill the elementary choir at Sacred Redeemer, Callie pushes her choir towards excellence. However, Callie takes a more balanced approach, striving for two types of rehearsals—those that are “precious” and those that are “drudgery.”

There’ve been some really precious moments, and often times—like I said—not in front of an audience. But what I want to know is that in those rehearsals—and not all of them, because I hope some of them are drudgery. I’m going to keep putting that out there—but that there will be something that those kids can say, “Wow, remember that day in rehearsal, Miss?” or, “Remember that night when we were pulling a five-hour . . .?” And when those moments are the things that they talk about as much as they talk about that night before the audience, then that’s the accomplishment. Now that doesn’t say that I don’t rant and rave sometimes in rehearsal, “We’re gonna get this right! We’re gonna get this right!” But that’s also about driving them so that they will have that sense that this was absolutely as good as it could be. And not be the best for somebody else, but to be the best for yourself so that you can say at the end of the day or at the end of the performance that “I did as much as I can.” It’s about the work, and it’s about that process and the learning that goes on through that.

When I observed Callie’s chamber choir rehearsals, I noted her tremendous energy—rehearsals moved along quickly, and as she admitted above, there were no breaks. Rehearsals were structured, with warm-ups at the beginning, followed by announcements and administrative-related issues, and finally rehearsal of repertoire. During the period that I observed Callie, she had a student-teacher from Memorial University working with her, and he was responsible for leading at least half of each rehearsal. Though I remained present while he taught, I did not take notes as he rehearsed.
Callie demonstrated her attention to discipline and expectations of hard work through the warm-up period, with quick reminders in between exercises: “Where are your feet? . . . Tone! . . . Three fingers for vowels.” During one of the rehearsal’s announcement periods, Callie addressed concert choir attendance issues, as all members of the chamber choir were required to be members of the concert choir. Callie was strict and firm in her tone. As she moved into the rehearsal of repertoire, she reminded them, “Sit up—heads up—straight up!” While Callie frames her rehearsals with a serious tone, she makes space for humour and sarcasm as the rehearsal progresses: “Feet down, Mike Prowse, or I’m going to amputate that leg!” Callie’s students respond well to her humour—in this case, they laughed together, and I noticed everyone adjusting themselves to sit a little taller. Callie is clear about her expectations, and she models them through her own efforts throughout the rehearsal.

**Personal best.** Callie finds great joy in teaching musical theatre. Not only does it combine her love of theatre and music, but it offers her the perfect opportunity to engage her students in preparing for musical performances that will never be about competition. While a musical is a collective effort, each student has an opportunity to explore the limits of his or her personal best. Along with attention to process and discipline, Callie emphasizes working towards personal best as a life lesson that her students can take away from her program.

_Everybody does performances, and everybody does them differently. People direct differently, and that’s great, and you learn different things from different directors, but there’s no need to feel like we’re doing a musical theatre production to beat some other school, and that’s what I love the best about it because I don’t have to feel like we have anything to prove—unless it’s something for them to prove about their personal best, like their personal progress with_
things, and to watch where they are during the beginning of a show and where they are at the end of it—and to—and to say each night, “What did I do last night that I could do better tonight? What can I focus on? Maybe I’m a little less nervous now and because I’m less nervous, I’ve gotten complacent.” It’s about finding that rhythm, and that’s really important, but that’s important for everybody and everything that they do—because most of these kids won’t go on in music. I need them to find out that they need to push themselves to be their own personal best—not at somebody else’s expense.

Callie does not enter her choirs in the competitive Kiwanis Music Festival, but she does participate in the Rotary Music Festival (also locally known as “MusicFest”), which does not award first, second, and third place, but gold, silver, and bronze “standards,” based on how well a group meets a set of criteria. At the Rotary Music Festival, all choirs entered in a particular class could walk away with a gold award, or all choirs could walk away with a bronze award. The focus, however, is never on the award itself—it is a festival that provides time for each group to work with a clinician after their performance, putting the focus on the process of refining a piece of music.

I never felt [MusicFest] was about beating somebody else. I felt it was about challenges that you made to yourself, and I didn’t really care if there were a thousand golds or two golds. It didn’t make any difference to me on that. It was about personal best.

While Callie finds that her students are drawn towards competitions—they want the opportunity to prove they are better than another school’s choir—she works to redirect their understanding of competition as something that leads to personal growth.

**Process.** At a young age, Callie developed negative feelings toward the competitive aspect of music. Her refusal to pray for a 90 at the Kiwanis Festival when she was in elementary school set a precedent for her professional career—as previously
mentioned, Callie does not enter her choirs in the Kiwanis Music Festival, which is primarily a competitive festival.

*Well, I am not as performance-based as I am process-based. That’s been true of theatre and choral. And that goes back to the whole thing of not being a real fan of competition. To me it’s the journey rather than the end product. I think if I know—if I hear them talk about a particular rehearsal and that something magical happened—if I hear that, and they talk about the rehearsal rather than the performance, then I feel like I’ve made something happen.*

Still, Callie acknowledges that performance is an important part of a music program, and that there is value in receiving public praise, but at the heart of what is important to her is the process of preparing for such a performance.

*There’s a place for applause and all that, don’t get me wrong. And the fact that the musicals that we’ve done here have been very, very financially successful, that helps. I’m not going to lie about that. But, I’m not audience-driven—you’re probably getting that by now. I mean you could’ve stopped any one of the musicals that I’ve done the week before—you’ve got to be able to look at the process of whatever it is you’re doing and say, “If I pulled the plug now, what will they have taken from it?” Because for me, if they’re driven by that day, that competition, that moment, [what] if that moment never comes? Will they feel completely unfulfilled, and will you as a teacher be unfulfilled?*

Performances are inevitable outcomes of a choir or a musical theatre production; therefore it may be difficult for students to conceptualize the rehearsal process as more important than the end result of a performance. Callie strives to bring her students to a place where they value the processes of creating music and working together so that they will carry with them enduring understandings that will be transferable to various contexts throughout their lives.
Core values: Summary. Callie’s professional knowledge and teaching practice are informed by her underlying values of hard work, striving for personal best, and process, each of which she hopes her students will come to value as well. Her commitment to hard work and striving for personal best have been informed by her experiences as an elementary school student with Sister Anita, who focused on discipline, hard work, and excellence. The ways in which Callie values process over product have also been informed by her elementary school experiences, but in a different way. Callie hated that competition and winning first place in festivals were fundamental components of her elementary school choral experience. In her own teaching practice, she has made the learning process more important than the end goal of a performance or competitive festival.

Chapter Summary

Part I of this chapter presented highlights of Callie’s life story, based on stories of experience she shared with me in our interviews, establishing the context for this study. Part II addressed the research questions of this study, exploring the facets of Callie’s professional knowledge that were revealed through our interviews and contextualized through observations of her choir rehearsals. Informed by experiences across her life span, Callie’s knowledge of self, her knowledge of her role as a teacher, her knowledge of choral music, her knowledge of the choral milieu, and her commitment to the values of hard work, working towards personal best, and process guide her practice in each of her teaching contexts.
Chapter Seven

As I read through the transcripts, and later my renderings of the participants’ life stories and their professional knowledge, many of my marginal notes took the form of “Reminds me of . . .” or “Similar to Kate’s story about . . .,” etc. While my intention was never to compare the participants’ stories for the purposes of developing common themes or arriving at definitive conclusions about professional knowledge, the music educator in me was drawn to the experiences and images to which I could completely relate. As the number of comments in the margins grew, I knew I would need to find a place for them in the thesis. In this chapter, I illuminate the points of resonance amongst the participants’ stories, and I reflect on how they resonate with my own story. In doing so, I articulate what I have learned about my own experiences and professional knowledge as a music educator through this inquiry. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) write:

> Stories are not icons to be learned but inquiries on which further inquiry takes place through their telling and through response to them. In this way, thinking again, relationship, and storytelling are interrelated. Stories of professional practice are stories of relationship and they are stories of thinking again. (p. 156)

In essence, this chapter represents an unanticipated inquiry—my inquiry as a music educator—as I respond to the stories of the participants through a process of “thinking again” about my professional practice. I had hoped my thesis inquiry would be a mode of professional development for the research participants. Indeed, it was for me as well.
Constructing Knowledge through Resonance

Conle (2000) states that “when a story is encountered experientially, one reacts to it through ‘resonance’ . . . and the narrative segment of a lived experience follows. Resonance is the process that carries the inquiry along, producing more and more stories . . .” (p. 53). In her dissertation, Samson (1998) uses resonances as signposts for reflections on her personal experiences that emerge through the writing of her participants’ stories and to identify further questions that emerge as a result of pondering the points of resonance. Drawing upon the work of Conle (1996), Griffin (2007) uses the idea of resonance as an analytical tool in her study of the musical lives of children as she looks across the in-school and out-of-school musical experiences of her participants. Griffin (2007) looks for resonances as a way of highlighting the connections amongst her participants as well the unique aspects of each of her participants’ narratives. Further, she uses the frame of resonance to examine the connections between each of the participants’ in-school experiences and out-of-school experiences, increasing the complexity of her understanding of each participant’s musical life. In this chapter, I highlight the resonances amongst the participants’ stories and respond to some of their stories through my own points of resonance.

Resonances in Professional Knowledge

In the following sub-sections, I address resonances in response to the first research question: What constitutes the professional knowledge of three choral music educators, as revealed in the stories they choose to tell of their lives?

Knowledge of self. That which constituted “knowledge of self” looked quite different for each participant. For Kate, it was mostly about personal qualities that she
brings to her professional practice. For Katherine, it was about identity and the roles she plays in her life. For Callie, it was primarily about a set of beliefs that shape her view of the world. However, two particular aspects of self-knowledge resonated across all three participants’ stories—how they view themselves as learners, and how they see themselves as Newfoundlanders.

Kate attributes some of her confidence as a teacher to the fact that she knows her strengths and weaknesses really well. This resonates with Katherine’s assertion that “good teachers” need to be honest about what they know and what they don’t know, and they need to be passionate about what they don’t know. And while Callie is nearing retirement, she speaks openly about how she is constantly learning new ways of teaching and new ways of understanding students. For all three women, taking responsibility for life-long professional learning is a key aspect of their identities as teachers, and it is that ongoing process of learning that informs their ever-developing professional knowledge base.

As I considered the importance of life-long learning to each of these women, I was reminded of two lessons I have shared with teacher candidates in my music curriculum and instruction classes. The first is that I emphasize the importance of taking advantage of professional development opportunities, such as workshops, symposia, and conferences in music education, and I urge them to take note of the experienced—or veteran—teachers that attend such events. I tell them that the veteran teachers that are in attendance are often the ones that could be leading the sessions themselves. I share with them the inspiration I take from such educators, who avail of every opportunity to learn
something new or to think about something in a new way—they openly demonstrate that their professional learning is never done.

The second lesson that I share has to do with building confidence in the early years of teaching. I tell them that while the first few years will be challenging, it is important to recognize, celebrate, and feel good about the things they do well. I encourage them to keep a running list of their challenges and prioritize them as part of their professional development goals. I share with them my memories of my very first year of teaching, when I was teaching Kindergarten to grade eight music in one school. I was very comfortable teaching primary, moderately comfortable teaching grades four through six, and extremely uncomfortable teaching grades seven and eight. I tell them I will always feel bad for my grades seven and eight students that year, but I used those experiences to guide my decisions about professional development opportunities. The knowledge and skills I needed to develop to become more prepared to teach grades seven and eight became the focus of my professional growth plan for my first two years of teaching. While it was tempting to go to more workshops such as “Circle Games” or “Teaching the Blues with Recorder” because they are so much fun, attending workshops on instrumental techniques and asking my neighbouring high school’s music teacher for guidance was much more productive. Like Katherine, I tell teacher candidates to “be honest about what [they] don’t know and [to] be excited by what [they] don’t know.” I truly believe that kind of attitude helps build responsibility in the profession.

Knowledge of teaching role. All three participants speak to the importance of building confidence in their students. Kate’s motivations are rooted in her own experiences of her private piano and cello teachers not showing confidence in her. Kate
wants all of her students to believe in themselves and to know that she believes in them as well. Katherine and Callie each speak about the crucial role building confidence early in the year plays in developing a sense of community within the ensemble. Further, Callie stresses how important it is to her to support the dreams of her students and to deliver a music program that will give them all they need to be successful at the post-secondary level.

Kate, Katherine, and Callie each speak specifically about teaching boys. For Kate and Callie, learning how to teach boys marked a significant turning point in the development of their professional knowledge. After an emotional lesson with a young boy whose voice had suddenly changed, Kate realized the importance of demonstrating sensitivity and compassion around the voice change. Prior to that experience, she had tended to make light of it through humour as an attempt to make boys feel more comfortable. For Callie, the change in her knowledge was more about teaching style than dealing with the changing voice. When Callie’s principal told her she needed to teach boys differently, she was resistant to the idea, feeling that teaching boys differently than the girls would represent an unfair approach. That was years before the term “differentiated instruction” entered the standard teaching discourse. When she realized that approaching the boys’ learning differently resulted in positive changes, she understood that equity was not the same as equality. Katherine, on the other hand, has always seemed to know how to teach boys. She attributes her comfort with and intuitive understanding of boys to growing up with only brothers and playing sports with the boys in her neighbourhood. Growing up in the midst of adolescent boys prepared her for a future in teaching adolescent boys.
I found it interesting that each of the participants shared aspects of their experiences teaching boys. I suspect this may be unique to the choral experience. While there are gender issues within instrumental music (e.g., instrument preference: Harrison & O’Neill, 2000; participation in jazz: McKeage, 2004; teaching styles and student behaviours: Zhukov, 2006), they are not as connected to issues of self-esteem and sexuality. Teaching boys in a choral context is different than teaching boys in an instrumental context.

**Knowledge of musical experience.** While each participant spoke about aspects of musicianship that were important to them, their most powerful stories were about the choral milieu—the transformative potential of singing choral music and the communal aspect of the choral experience. Kate’s primary goal at every rehearsal is to have the choristers walk away feeling that the rehearsal was one of the most beautiful parts of their week. Callie is moved by choral music’s ability to “lift us to another place.” She wants that experience for her students and for their audiences as well. Katherine echoes these sentiments. Particularly moved by the transformative experiences they have had with their choirs when there was no audience at all, Callie and Katherine both stress the power of those transformative moments without any audience.

The beautiful and transformative experiences in their rehearsal spaces are able to emerge once a sense of community has been established. Kate, Katherine, and Callie each share stories about the bonds they have seen form amongst choristers, bonds that lead to a sense of ownership within an ensemble and a united goal of working towards excellence when performing. Safety and respect are the requisite elements for such a sense of community. All three participants shared stories that expressed the importance of
establishing a safe environment in which choristers are willing to take personal and musical risks and an environment in which there is mutual respect between conductor and chorister and amongst choristers.

Resonances in Life Experiences

In the following sub-sections, I address resonances in response to the second research question: What life experiences, as revealed through their stories, have informed the professional knowledge of these three choral music educators?

Experiences as students. The learning and music-making atmosphere that Kate, Katherine, and Callie create in their choral contexts have been informed directly by their elementary (Kate and Callie) and high school (Katherine) experiences. Kate says of her early choral experiences, “I loved that feeling of being in amongst a group of people and it all happening around you. . . . It was just such a feeling of power.” Katherine speaks of her high school experiences with Sister Ellen, “She taught us about joy. She had so much passion. . . . There was always so much joy.” And Callie fondly remembers singing “Eternal Life” in grade four, “I remember thinking . . . ‘It doesn’t get any better than this.’ . . . Listening to this music, and being on an inside part . . . it’s just like being in a sandwich, and you’ve got the soprano on top and the alto [underneath], and the chords are right, and the music is just ethereal. . . . I was probably in grade four or five when we did that one, and thinking, ‘This is incredible. This is all you need in your life now.’”

Each of the participants’ reflections on their early choral experiences is imbued with positive emotions and a genuine sense that those early experiences hooked them on lives with choral music.
I read Kate, Katherine, and Callie’s stories about their joyous experiences in school choirs with a slight sense of envy. My own school experiences with choirs were not as inspiring. My memories of primary school glee club are sparse and bleak. The first is from grade two—Sister Evelyn would constantly yell at us to open our mouths wider—I left glee club every week with an aching jaw. The second is from grade three—we performed two songs at the Kiwanis Music Festival. The first was a test piece, and the second was our own selection. I don’t remember the test piece, but I remember our “own selection” was an arrangement of “Michael Finnegan.” I practiced that song over and over again at home. Unlike the unison test piece, it was in two parts, and I felt so proud to have memorized all the words and notes to the second part. My best friend, who stood next to me, would tell me to sing louder because the girl on her other side didn’t know her part as well. I secretly loved that she would ask me to sing louder, though my shy demeanour would never have revealed the truth. After we had performed the piece at the Kiwanis Festival, the adjudicator came on stage and praised us for our performance of the test piece. I remember feeling so proud. But then he destroyed all sense of pride as he told us he did not like our second selection at all. His criticism was mostly of the actual piece as opposed to our performance of it, and I remember feeling hurt for our teacher who had selected the music. Those are the only memories I have of singing in a choir in school. Once I started elementary school, we had to choose between band and choir, and I chose band. By the time I reached high school, there wasn’t even a choir to not be a part of. I sang in my church choir during high school, but because I was so shy, I never really felt like I belonged there. That feeling was reinforced this past Christmas when I bumped
into someone I had been in the choir with for five years, and she had no idea who I was. I would have to wait until my undergraduate years for a positive choral experience.

Though Kate, Katherine, and Callie had meaningful experiences in their school choirs, under the direction of Sisters Brenda, Ellen, and Anita, they each spoke of unsettling experiences as well. Kate began to play the cello because Sister Brenda told her that she would play the cello, and in Kate’s words, “You didn’t say no to the nuns. I loved her dearly, but her holy stick would rap your fingers if you were playing out of tune, and she would squish your fingers together.” Katherine shared memories of her piano lessons, “My piano lessons with Sister Una were kind of scary. There was nothing nurturing about them. Sister Una was a scary, scary person. She really loved me . . . but she was really frightening with a lot of kids . . . but thank god she liked me.” Callie spoke of her experiences at Sacred Redeemer, “There were things that were really negative. That was just her way of trying to get the best out of us, and she would say, time and time again, ‘Hopeless, hopeless.’ She’d stand in front of us and say that we were hopeless.”

Despite these experiences, Kate and Callie each say those nuns are the reason they ended up with careers as music educators. Both were forgiving as well, expressing their beliefs that Sister Brenda and Sister Anita just did as they knew how. Research has shown how negative childhood experiences with music have led to fear and failure (Bartel & Cameron, 2000; MacArthur, 2011); thus, Kate, Katherine, and Callie’s stories raise questions about who survives those experiences only to come out stronger in the end—developing a passion for music and for teaching music in respectful and safe environments.
Experiences as teachers. Kate, Katherine, and Callie each have questions that propel them to further their professional knowledge. For Kate, her questions relate to the differences between boys and girls, men and women and how they relate to the role of the conductor: “As a teacher-conductor, are we different? Should we be different? Can we be different? How can we be different? The pedagogy—how is it different? The curriculum—repertoire—how are those things different?” Katherine’s questions relate to her life-long passion for music theory and build upon her master’s paper about choral intonation: “I stopped it when it was still a practical guide for teachers . . . but there’s so much more that I wanted to write about. . . . I was starting to get into mathematical equations, and I got really excited about it, and that’s when [my advisor] said, ‘Stop.’ So I’ve got to continue on with my paper, so it will be a natural extension of my master’s paper, but a little bit harder to understand.” Callie’s questions are less specific, but her quest for knowledge is evident: “We’re never really where we want to be. . . . I’m constantly learning, I’m two years from retirement and constantly learning, constantly fixing how I evaluate things, fixing, trying new things with my teaching.”

While their questions lead them to formal pursuits, such as graduate programs, and organized professional development opportunities, Kate, Katherine, and Callie each spoke of how much they have learned in their classrooms through their students. Kate and Katherine related stories about their early years of teaching. Kate: “I cannot tell you how much I learned, and they didn’t even know this . . . I’d be looking for the reaction of a couple of those kids, knowing, learning from them, grasping for everything I could because I wanted so much to do well, to learn . . .” Katherine: “When I started off, I had [extremely talented] girls in my choir, and so I had the opportunity to learn from them.”
Callie expressed a sense of gratitude as she spoke about learning from her students:

“We’re constantly evolving as human beings and constantly evolving as teachers and as learners, and I’m always fascinated in this business about how much the kids teach me.”

Their stories reminded me of an important lesson I learned as a first-year teacher, a lesson I have previously written about elsewhere:

I recall “Jason,” a grade four student who pleaded with me on many occasions to allow him to demonstrate the dances he was learning in his Hungarian classes. (Jason was born in Canada, but his heritage was Hungarian—he attended Hungarian language and culture classes on Saturdays.) Eventually, I allowed Jason to dance for the class, but I admit I was reluctant to let him do so. I suppose I was afraid to give up some of my power, and as a first-year teacher I wanted to maintain “control.” Also, I was so concerned about “covering the curriculum” that I did not feel I could spare the time to do something “extra.” It was not until I finally let Jason share his heritage with us that I realized how important it was for me to allow all students the same opportunity. I saw how the other students truly enjoyed Jason’s performance, and I saw the pride Jason had in being able to share something new with everyone. Jason’s performance led to a lively question and answer session through which we all acquired new knowledge. Most importantly, I saw that Jason’s performance actually did “fit the curriculum”—all I had to do was expand my understanding of what curriculum was all about. . . . My experience with Jason was an “a-ha” moment in my development as a teacher. It was then that I truly realized that students bring significant experiences to the classroom, experiences that act as catalysts for self-growth of all members of the classroom community (including the teacher). (Dawe, 2009, p. 7).

Kate said that she had never before shared aloud her story of looking to her students for musical insights, and when I originally wrote my story about Jason, I felt a little like I was kneeling in a confessional. Each of these stories reminds me to share with
teacher candidates the importance of being open to learning from students—they have so much to teach us—about music, about the world, and about ourselves.

**Experiences as adult learners.** All three participants shared similar perspectives on their graduate school experiences. While the circumstances were different for each of them, there were resonances in their motivations and outcomes. Kate took advantage of the fact that Memorial University was starting a master’s program in conducting at the same time she was moving back to St. John’s without a job. While she hadn’t been thrilled about leaving her dream job in Toronto, of her master’s program, Kate said, “It was the best thing that ever happened to me. I met all my very good friends in that program and learned so much. It was heaven, really.” Katherine pursued her master’s in conducting over a series of intense summer semesters, with the good fortune of her parents traveling with her to the United States to provide childcare. Even with personal sacrifices, the experience was completely worthwhile: “I really learned a lot—because you get out of the master’s what you put into it, and I did the degree that I wanted to do. . . I was in my total glee.” Callie went to the United States for her master’s degree in children’s theatre. She had promised herself a change after ten years of teaching, and the master’s was it: “It seemed right that I was going to do the second degree in theatre because I was directing musicals without any theatre background—just intuitive sense . . . The new ideas I took from that program, I was able to use in the years that followed.” For each of the participants, the master’s degree fulfilled both personal and professional needs.

Unable to find a permanent contract as a school music teacher, I moved from St. John’s to Toronto to complete a master’s earlier in my career than Kate, Katherine, and
Callie. Nevertheless, it was a pivotal experience in my personal and professional development. While not on my own for the first time, settling into Toronto was quite an adjustment. I moved to the city in early July and every day, for almost two full months, I walked past the building where I would eventually take all of my master’s courses, without ever stepping inside. I was too overwhelmed, unsure of my readiness for graduate work, unsure of my readiness to attend a university the size of the University of Toronto. I eventually entered the building at the end of August to meet with my faculty advisor before classes started. When he pulled a bag of maple cookies from his desk drawer and asked me if I would like one, I knew that I had found a new home.

Professionally, my master’s degree was also transformational. I had entered the program frustrated with my experiences as a school music teacher. I was never quite sure if I was doing things right. My plans were to return to school teaching as a social studies teacher after the master’s. Fortunately, that never happened, as my commitment to teaching music was renewed once I was able to articulate my philosophy and values surrounding teaching and learning in music.

In a course paper written during my master’s, I noted:

Through my work in graduate studies, I have come to realize what it is that I value in terms of music education and how those values came to be. . . . As a result of [a narrative self-study] I feel grounded in the decisions I have made as a teacher, and I feel more comfortable with my identity as a teacher. I have not always felt that I have lived up to the expectations that were set before me during my teacher education. I have struggled to understand my true motivations as a teacher and to make sense of my approach to music teaching and learning. . . . Discovering the concept of ‘personal practical knowledge’ has been one of the most powerful experiences of my graduate studies. It has enabled me to negotiate many of the tension points I had been experiencing surrounding my understanding
of myself as a teacher. . . . It is my belief that my heightened self-knowledge will further enable me to create viable spaces for identity development in my classroom and to approach music education as transformative education. (as cited in Beattie (2009), pp. 52-53)

**Resonances in the Newfoundland Context**

In the following sub-sections, I address resonances in response to the third research question: How have the experiences of developing as educators within the specific social, cultural, and political contexts of Newfoundland and Labrador shaped the professional knowledge of these three choral music educators?

**Lessons learned from the feeling of “less than.”** Kate, Katherine, and Callie each shared stories relating to the feelings of “less than” held by many Newfoundlanders. Kate heard it from her grandfather: “Well, we didn’t get that because we’re from Newfoundland.” Katherine remembers feeling it in high school before traveling to a national choral competition: “Oh my god, we’re not going to be good enough. . . . We were of the same mentality of all Newfoundlanders back then. We all thought we weren’t good enough.” Callie believes the defeatist attitude continues to pervade: “I have some issues with the fact that we always place ourselves second. We always undermine what we do.” Working against this attitude contributes to each of these music educators’ goals as performers. Kate celebrates Newfoundland by bringing her choirs to international stages with a selection of Newfoundland compositions among her repertoire. Katherine’s foremost goal when she travels with her choirs is to “make Newfoundland proud.” Callie has taken her choirs to perform music from Newfoundland on international stages, but her main work is done in her classroom, where she is intent on teaching her students
about the cultural history and context that surrounds any song from Newfoundland that she includes in their repertoire.

Each of the participants’ stories resonates with my personal experience. While I have never held the defeatist attitude, I have felt during my time in Calgary and Toronto that I have had to educate many Canadians about where Newfoundland is; the difference between Saint John, New Brunswick and St. John’s, Newfoundland; how to pronounce Newfoundland; and that there is no way to drive to Newfoundland without taking a ferry. Living among such questions on a regular basis doesn’t make me feel less than, but it has made me feel that others may wrongfully view me as less than.

**Newfoundland music and identity.** Ironically, while many Newfoundlanders exhibit a collective sense of “less than,” they also demonstrate a strong sense of Newfoundland identity. As Katherine relates when talking about her goal of making Newfoundland proud when traveling with her choirs, “You can ask any Newfoundlander: we’re not proud Canadians; we’re proud Newfoundlanders.” This sentiment resonates with Kate’s story about choosing the performance order of music for an upcoming concert with her youth choir. While Kate had thought they would choose to end the performance with a rousing Latin American piece, they chose a lyrical piece about Newfoundland, “The Ballad of Skipper Knight,” by Stephen Hatfield. When Kate asked them why, they said, “Well, Miss Kate, this is us.” Even at a young age, the ties to Newfoundland are tight.

Callie tells a moving story about taking a choir from Bishop O’Neill to Carnegie Hall. Through each of their songs, the choir shared a piece of Newfoundland’s history. While it educated the audience about the fishery, its collapse, and Newfoundland’s
commitment to rebuilding, it also taught the students from Bishop O’Neill about their identity as Newfoundlanders: “I think it was only when we got there, on that stage and were singing it that those kids really got that sense of place, and that this is who we are, this defines us, and we need to be proud of that... They never realized how much they had to tell and how much people embrace that story.”

I remember that months after moving to Calgary, I began to notice that when people asked me where I was from, I always responded with “Newfoundland” as opposed to “St. John’s,” while I would hear others say they were from Saskatoon or Vancouver and not Saskatchewan or British Columbia. In part, it may have been to avoid the question, “Is that Newfoundland or New Brunswick?” in response to “St. John’s,” but I think it had more to do with a sense of nationhood that so many Newfoundlanders feel in connection to Newfoundland. While I was born in Canada’s tenth province, many people of my generation have parents who were born when Newfoundland was under British-appointed rule. The question of whether or not Newfoundland should have joined confederation still lingers, and whether or not a Newfoundlander knows and understands the opposing sides to that argument, there is a tremendous sense of Newfoundland identity above all. I remember when I was teaching in Ferryland, a town approximately 70 kilometres south of St. John’s, Easter holidays were approaching, and a grade five student told me that he and his family were “going to Canada” for the holidays. I had to give a little social studies lesson, but I am sure that did not change his sense of Canada being some place outside of Newfoundland, and I would suspect that his confusion over Newfoundland’s relationship to Canada was rooted in messages received at home.
Newfoundland pride. It is difficult to disconnect Newfoundland identity from Newfoundland pride, though I suppose to avoid romanticizing the notion of Newfoundland pride too much, I should note that one can identify as a Newfoundlander without carrying a sense of Newfoundland pride. However, each of the participants in this study clearly identified as proud Newfoundlanders.10

Speaking about listening to Newfoundland music at home as a child, Kate says, “It’s incredible once you start to have a foundation of knowledge about something. You feel like you own it, and that’s where a lot of the feeling of Newfoundland came for me. It comes from the music. I have a lot of pride in this province and the island and where I’m from, and it comes from the music.”

Katherine speaks of her sense of duty to Newfoundland: “I really feel a duty to this phenomenal place that gave me so much. I would feel I had let my province down if I hadn’t done my best job. . . . Be a proud Newfoundlander and realize you are on top of the world when it comes to music, and go show people. I’m excited that this place has become one of the leaders in choral music in the country . . . I’m just a really proud Newfoundlander.”

Callie expresses a similar sense of duty when she talks about being offered a teaching position in England immediately following her teaching internship there: “I was asked to stay on there, but I felt it was my place to come back . . . One thing King instilled in us was that we were Newfoundlanders and that it was really important for us to give back—but I would have done that anyway.” She also shares a story about how she would

10 I should acknowledge that neither the participants nor I referenced Labrador in our stories about Newfoundland. The official name of the province is “Newfoundland and Labrador,” but in our experiences, our identities are tied to the island portion of the province—Newfoundland.
make her grade 10 Cultural Heritage class stand and sing the “Ode to Newfoundland” at
the beginning of each class: “I make them do that because I believe we need to be proud
of where we’re from. . . . I’m a very passionate Newfoundlander.”

This sense of Newfoundland pride was probably the most uniformly expressed
aspect of each of Kate, Katherine, and Callie’s experiences. I cannot say any less: I am a
proud Newfoundlander. Living in Toronto, I am very much aware of my identity as a
Newfoundlander, and I find opportunities to express my pride in that identity and in the
achievements of other Newfoundlanders. Shortly after moving to Toronto in 2003, I
heard that Damhnait Doyle would be performing at the Indigo bookstore in the Eaton
Centre. Damhnait, a Toronto-based singer-songwriter was originally from St. John’s. The
last time I had seen her perform live, she was the Wicked Witch in her high school’s
production of the musical Into the Woods. She had been phenomenal then, so I expected
nothing less more than ten years later. I remember I wore a black t-shirt with a silver
outline of the island of Newfoundland on the front. The choice of attire was purposeful—
I wanted to let Damhnait know that someone “from home” was there to support her, and I
wanted to let any other Newfoundlanders know that I was one of them too. That was the
first of many outings when I have worn a Newfoundland t-shirt as a way of expressing
my pride. Having lived in Toronto for nine years, I do call Toronto home. I have spent
the most significant years of my adult life there; I started dating my husband (also from
Newfoundland) there; and I have a circle of friends there who have become my extended
family. But I call Newfoundland home too—as in my homeland, I suppose. No matter
where life takes me, Newfoundland—St. John’s—will always be my true home.
I close this chapter with an excerpt from Canadian playwright TJ Dawe’s play Labrador (2003). Dawe was born and raised on the west coast of Canada, while his father was born and raised on the east coast. Here, Dawe presents his observations of Newfoundlanders’ unique sense of home.

Newfoundland
Well now
That rang something special for me
You see, my dad’s from St. John’s
His whole side of the family’s there—he’s the only one who left
Pardon me—he’s the only one who left and didn’t go back
They all go back
Not just his family, but anyone from that province
I don’t know why—doesn’t seem like an easy place to live
But if you grew up there, there’s a magic about the place that gets into your blood and bones and nothing can keep you away—nothing
Not the insane weather that sometimes brings ice and snow in June—I’d hear this on the phone from my grandparents
Not the complete economic collapse that killed the fishing industry and has made it absolutely impossible to find a job of any kind, for anyone
Not the twelve per cent provincial sales tax, plus GST
Nothing can stop the wandering Newfoundlander from wanting, needing, having to come home
Home
That’s what they call it: Home
They never say Newfoundland
And the way a Newfoundlander says it, the word has its full value, that extra oomph, that tinge in the voice
Home
The place you do nothing but miss when you’re away
And that brings you comfort and solace and joy when you return (pp. 21-22)
Chapter Eight

The catalyst for this inquiry was my desire to understand what music educators know about teaching as a result of their life experiences. I wanted to explore the idea that “the process of negotiating one’s understanding of teaching is lifelong” (Carter & Doyle, 1995, p. 189). My first research question asked, “What constitutes the professional knowledge of three choral music educators, as revealed in the stories they choose to tell of their lives?” The stories of each participant revealed insights in five categories of professional knowledge: knowledge of self, knowledge of teaching, knowledge of music, knowledge of the choral milieu, and core values. I did not enter into data analysis with a preconceived set of knowledge categories to look for, but my findings closely align with Elbaz’s (1983) content categories of practical knowledge: knowledge of self and milieu, subject matter knowledge, and knowledge of curriculum and instruction.

My second research question asked, “What life experiences, as revealed through their stories, have informed the professional knowledge of these three choral music educators?” Participants shared stories about people who had been influential in their development as choral music educators. These people included parents, teachers, colleagues and students—a common thread was the influence of nuns in their early schooling. They shared stories about joyful experiences as students, reinforcing the influence of the apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975/2002). Each participant spoke highly of the value of their graduate work, which they each viewed as something they did for themselves. Finally, each of the participants revealed themselves as reflective practitioners (Schön, 1983) who learn from their daily experiences as educators.
My third research question asked, “How have the experiences of developing as educators within the specific social, cultural, and political contexts of Newfoundland and Labrador shaped the professional knowledge of these three choral music educators?” There was resounding unity in response to this question, though I never asked it directly. All three participants presented themselves as proud Newfoundlanders who have been affected by the feeling of Newfoundlanders being regarded as “less than.” This specific aspect of their social experience informs their professional knowledge and their teaching goals as they work to instil a sense of cultural understanding and pride in heritage amongst their students.

Aside from constructing knowledge in relation to the research questions, I have also developed new understandings about professional knowledge and narrative inquiry. I summarize these new understandings in the following section. Next, I present new questions that have emerged as a result of this inquiry, which I frame as implications for professional development, music teacher education, and future research. Finally, I close with a short reflection on my thesis journey.

Further Contributions to Knowledge

Professional Knowledge

When I first proposed this thesis inquiry, instead of using the term professional knowledge I used personal practical knowledge, but as I struggled to define precisely what personal practical knowledge was, I sought a different term. After reading countless literature reviews related to teacher knowledge, I was satisfied with Goodson and Cole’s (1993) conception of professional knowledge. Unlike other conceptions of teacher-related knowledge, it did not come with a set list of categories attached to it, and it
acknowledged—even valued—the professional knowledge of a teacher outside of the classroom context. As I worked through the data, I began to jot in my notes, “Is this professional knowledge?” I wondered if I would have to change my research questions to make it fit the data. As I continued to live with and make sense of the data, I became satisfied that it was indeed knowledge that I was seeing, but was it the professional knowledge of which Goodson and Cole conceptualized? There was little mention of tensions, politics, and negotiating teaching contexts. When I began to revisit the literature for chapter two, I was drawn to Elbaz’s notion of practical knowledge. I had not thoroughly considered it before, focusing only on personal practical knowledge, which I interpreted as an updated version of practical knowledge. Practical knowledge, with fewer categories of knowledge than personal practical knowledge, suddenly seemed to make more sense in the context of my study. That being said, I resisted the temptation to return to the data and make it fit the categories of knowledge proposed by Elbaz. My original intention of using the more open definition of professional knowledge stands. While the stories of the research participants did not necessarily reveal the full complexity of professional knowledge as conceptualized by Goodson and Cole, they revealed many important and significant things that the participants know about teaching choral music. These “things” are aspects of the knowledge that guides their professional practice. For me, that is professional knowledge.

This study reaffirms the understanding that professional knowledge is rooted in personal experience. While teacher development is typically regarded as beginning with a teacher’s entry into the profession, I posit that the contributions of childhood experiences to professional knowledge would position the beginning of teacher development much
earlier in the life span, even if retroactively. While Kate and Callie intended to become 
music teachers from a very early age, Katherine had not really thought about it until Dr. 
King gave her no choice but to complete the music education program at Memorial. Still, 
her high school music experiences with Sister Ellen played a significant role in the 
development of her professional knowledge. Looking back, Katherine’s development as a 
teacher began in high school, if not before, even if at the time she did not know she was 
on the path to becoming a teacher.

It is interesting that with the exception of Katherine’s attention to teaching music 
theory, the participants did not talk about their skills as musicians. Only in passing were 
references made to conducting and vocal technique. Without my prompting, their stories 
focused on experiences that demonstrated knowledge of the “knowing that” sort rather 
than the “knowing how” sort. I cannot know for sure, but I wonder if career stage has 
anything to do with this distinction. In their mid- to late-careers, I wonder if the musical 
skills of these three educators are such a taken-for-granted aspect of their professional 
knowledge that it did not occur to them to talk about things such as conducting and vocal 
technique. The fact that Kate, Katherine, and Callie did not discuss their musicianship 
raises a point of tension with respect to the music teacher identity literature, which 
suggests that secondary choral conductors would likely have stronger musician identities 
than teacher identities. In each of these cases, that may in fact be true; but it is not 
necessarily untrue. However, the participants did talk about themselves more as 
teachers/educators than they did about themselves as musicians/conductors. Again, might 
this have something to do with career stage? Most of the music teacher identity research 
has been done in the context of preservice teachers. While I cannot be sure what it means,
it is noteworthy that the stories each of the participants shared pointed to knowledge about teaching and learning in a choral context much more explicitly than to knowledge about conducting and teaching people how to sing.

**Narrative Inquiry**

I knew early on in my ponderings about a potential thesis inquiry that I would likely choose to engage in a narrative inquiry because it resonated so strongly with how I have experienced the world and constructed knowledge from a young age. Though it seemed a natural fit, it was not without its challenges. The process of conducting this inquiry has challenged one very basic assumption that underlies my understanding of narrative inquiry: the assumption that we express who we are and what we know through story. While two of the participants quite naturally went into story-telling mode during our interviews, it took multiple interviews before the other participant began to comfortably share stories of experience with me. I come away from this inquiry with a realization that not everyone easily tells a story when put on the spot. With experience, I am certain I will develop skills that will help me elicit stories from participants who do not slip into a natural story-telling mode right away, but I have to wonder how participant stories may be affected when they have to be teased out. In my case, perhaps the problem lay with a lack of understanding on the part of the participant as to how the interviews would unfold. Perhaps I could have reviewed the letter of invitation more explicitly. Or perhaps I need to reconsider what counts as story.

I did not include artifacts in the data collection for this study. If I could turn back time, I would have included artifacts. When I originally proposed this study, I did not include artifacts because I was concerned about asking too much of the participants. I
was concerned I would have difficulty finding participants who would commit to a study that looked like too much extra work on their part. I believe my concerns were wrapped up in a sense of sharing artifacts meaning sending participants home to dig through boxes to find a lifetime’s worth of material things to share. My vision of artifact collection had likely been skewed by the artifact collection I had undertaken to conduct a self-study for my major research paper at the end of my master’s program. My personal artifacts included childhood drawings, cassette tapes, books, over two decades of personal journals, five years of professional journals, teacher planner books, photographs, concert programmes . . . The list could go on and on. Looking back on this thesis study, even one artifact of importance to each participant could have been helpful in adding to the richness of the narratives of the life stories I constructed. And it would have likely been a useful tool to help elicit stories from the participant who took to telling stories later in the process than the other two. Without prompting, Callie gave me a CD that her choir recorded during the last year Bishop O’Neill was open as a high school. That lone CD spoke volumes about the meaning she attached to that particular experience—recording the CD—and what it represented—a metaphor for the closing of Bishop O’Neill through the story of Newfoundland’s Irish heritage, from immigration to the wealth of the fishery, to its destruction and eventual out-migration. One artifact of importance to each participant would have added another layer to their stories.

**Implications**

In the following sections, I outline suggested implications for professional development in music education, for music teacher education, and for future research.
Implications for professional development in music education

I began this thesis inquiry with the hopes that it would be a mutually beneficial endeavour. While I did not ask my participants directly if it had been of any benefit to them, I was pleased that two of the participants brought up the value of the experience without any prodding from me.

During our second interview, Kate shared with me how she had thought about the first interview for days after it had happened:

_I do spend a lot of time thinking, but just—I think especially in the earlier process—that first interview—to have to go back and reflect on my experiences growing up, and to make those connections with what I’m doing now, and how my entire life has kind of—and obviously it would—but my experiences as a young musician, as a kid in school, as a university student, as a young teacher, have completely informed how I teach today. That’s been a really big and powerful tool for me. Because it makes you sit back. I mean it makes you sit back and think about some of the decisions you’ve made recently and how you move forward with some things, and most important, it makes you look at all the individuals that you’re working with and saying, “Every single one of those people, their lives are built the same way mine is.” I think looking at the people that are in those ensembles that you’re working with is the most important thing you do as a—I can honestly say, this is one thing I probably would be arrogant enough to say—for any teacher, no matter if a child is four years old and you’re teaching Suzuki violin or cello, or an 85-year old Christian brother, to realize that they all have very complex, complicated, incredible lives, and that every experience they have helps them form who they are, and you’re one of their experiences. And in many cases, you’re a really big experience for them, their music-making—huge. So that’s a large thing that this has done for me. It’s incredible, and so—this is so good for me to be talking about this stuff. It’s really amazing actually—holy cow—everybody should have to do this as a teacher. Everybody!
Katherine shared her thoughts on the value of the process during our second interview:

*It helps me sometimes when I sit down and talk because I really don’t think about those things. And someday when I retire and I can think about them more, maybe I’ll write something, you know. I’ve learned more about myself listening to you—it’s been a nice experience for me. I’m glad I did this. You know what, even talking myself, when you ask the questions—it solidifies some things, that, you know, because you just kind of go fast-forward through this whole teaching career, and things work, but you don’t give any thought as to why they work. Sometimes it’s nice to analyse, you know.*

I think that the music education community can begin to reconceptualize professional development so that we acknowledge the complexity and personal nature of professional knowledge. While “self-reflection” does not appear on the professional development needs list as expressed by music teachers, the reflections of Kate and Katherine indicate that they did not necessarily anticipate the professional development that would occur as a result of participating in this study. Delving into personal histories and life stories is a form of professional development that many music educators likely do not realize could and would be useful, particularly beyond the early stages of a teaching career.

**Implications for music teacher education**

The stories of Kate, Katherine, and Callie support the research literature that suggests we need to rethink music teacher education. Interestingly, research on the efficacy of music teacher education programs tends to involve teachers in the early years of their teaching careers (e.g., Ballantyne & Parker, 2004; Conway, 2002). Findings indicate that beginning teachers wish they had learned more about the administration and
organization of music programs and that they had had more real-life problem-solving situations. The participants in this study did not talk about what they wish they had learned in their music education programs, but each of them expressed a sense that their degree programs did not really prepare them for school teaching. Kate and Katherine emphasized the social nature of music school as the positive aspect of their degrees. Callie asserts that she learned more about teaching at Sacred Redeemer (her elementary school) than she did at music school. The successes of Kate, Katherine, and Callie, in tandem with their stories about childhood influences on their practices as choral music educators speak volumes about the power of the apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975/2002), but can it be possible that undergraduate music education programs do so little to prepare teachers for the profession? Even from a completely different perspective and vantage point, three mid- to late-year music educators claim they did not learn how to be teachers through their initial degree programs. However, these are also the same three choral music educators who did not talk about conducting, rehearsal planning, and pedagogical practice, all components of a music teacher education program. Are these skills so much a part of the daily “how to” knowledge of teaching that they become taken for granted? No matter the answers, we need to do a better job at making music teacher education programs more relevant—or perhaps we need to do a better job at enabling teacher candidates and beginning teachers to understand how their programmes can be relevant to their professional practice.

Implications for future research

In chapter two, I pointed to the growing interest in narrative inquiry in music education. Here, I suggest that some of the research being presented as “narrative
inquiry” is more accurately described as another type of qualitative research that uses narrative methods or narrative representation. I would argue that the narrative inquiry methodology outlined in chapter three does not apply to all of the research being labelled as narrative inquiry. I support and encourage the growth of narrative inquiry in music education. I am excited to see a research perspective that was so foreign to music education when I began my master’s to have flourished in our discipline in less than a decade. But I do worry about the tendency of “anything and everything” that includes long quotations from participants to be classified as narrative research. More work needs to be done to clarify the epistemological and ontological assumptions that underpin narrative inquiry as a research methodology. Narrative inquiry is a methodology and not simply a research method.

This thesis inquiry has presented me with several ideas about areas for future research. I believe there is room for more research on the personalized nature of professional knowledge in music education. While this study focused on the stories of the participants, studies that make more use of participant observations would be valuable in exploring what music educators do in relation to what they say. Further to this would be the notion of learning more about the aspects of professional knowledge that music educators take for granted.

While much of the research exploring the relationship between the personal and professional has been done at the preservice stage, it would be beneficial to our growing understanding of what constitutes professional knowledge and how it develops to examine the stories music educators tell at different stages of their careers. Do the nature
of the stories change? Does the content of the stories change? How can teachers’ stories inform professional development opportunities in music education?

In this thesis, a sense of place was specific to the Newfoundland context. Within this context, what would the stories of the participants’ students be? How do they experience place? Do they experience place in similar ways? In organizations that have cultural identity development as part of their mandates, how do participants experience place? How do people from “away” experience Newfoundland culture within a choral setting? Finally, does this sense of place exist within a teaching and learning context elsewhere?

**Exploring Professional Knowledge: Ending with Myself**

I began this inquiry with hopes that it would provide me with new understandings about professional knowledge and my participants with professional development. However, I had not considered that it would be a form of professional development for me as well. Chapter seven addresses one aspect of this professional development through the stories of resonance, but most significantly, this thesis work has informed my work as a music teacher educator. Halfway through the process I wrote:

I assumed I would uncover all kinds of interesting stories about my participants’ lives—*unrelated to music*—that have shaped their professional knowledge. What I have discovered is that their professional knowledge has absolutely been shaped by their lives—it’s just that they relate their life stories in the context of their musical lives. It’s so much a part of their identities that it shapes their stories. We need to pay attention—more attention to the experiences we bring to the table and formally make sense of them—I am beginning to do this with the self-study assignment in the I/S class [the secondary music curriculum course I have taught at the University of Toronto]. As a teacher educator, I want my students to make
sense of and value their life experiences—in and out of music—so that they not only understand who they are but have a grounded sense of what they know—and a developing understanding of what they need to know. (Personal journal, May 2, 2010)

I have continued to develop the self-study assignment, and I am beginning to see a trickle-down effect as former teacher candidates share with me assignments they have developed to learn about their students’ personal knowledge of and experiences with music. Such assignments—and certainly this thesis—reinforce and, in fact, emphasize that telling stories can be more than a pleasurable activity (Connelly & Clandinin, 1985). Storytelling can be an educative act, and the limits of what stories can teach are endless.
References


Kroon, C. (2009). Everybody should be heard; everybody has got a story to tell, or a song to sing. In M. S. Barrett & S. L. Stauffer (Eds.), *Narrative inquiry in music education* (pp. 35-56). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.


