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A Qualitative Examination of Undergraduate Music Students' Compositional Identity

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ABSTRACT

A Qualitative Examination of Undergraduate Music Students' Compositional Identity

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The primary purpose of this study was to describe what comprises an undergraduate compositional identity. Building upon recent research investigating musical identities with a social psychological framework (Macdonald, Hargreaves, & Miell, 2002), I examined the confluence of socially based experiences that shaped four undergraduate composers' lives.

Specifically, this study investigated the concept of undergraduate compositional identity by examining the development, experience, and compositional voice of undergraduate composers. This approach parallels the research of Davidson (2002) which examines three primary factors of musical identity development: 1) environmental factors, 2) casual but frequent exposure to music and performance contexts, and 3) role of key others. Students' compositional voice and style illustrated their compositional development.

To provide a thorough depiction of the composers' experiences I utilized both case study design and a narrative approach. Participants in the study were traditional-aged undergraduates between 17-24 years, enrolled as full time undergraduate composition majors at a small Northeastern school of music. Semi-structured interviews, correspondence with participants, and observations at the school site were

used for data collection. Data analysis included coding as well as storyboard techniques to facilitate organization and presentation of narratives and case studies.

Analysis of within case data revealed that the four undergraduate composition majors were supported throughout their musical development by accommodating home environments, consistent exposure to quality musical experiences, and knowledgeable teachers and mentors. Additionally, the composers' styles were constantly evolving and fluid, shifting between personally held opinions of musical expressions and the expectations of their composer-teachers. Cross-case analysis revealed eight themes that prominently shaped the participants' compositional identity: (1) support of family, (2) the piano as a symbol, (3) view of self as performer, (4) pursuit of multiple undergraduate degrees, (5) role of competition, (6) role of sound sources and muses, (7) view of virtuosic writing, and (8) future career goals. In sum, an undergraduate compositional identity was subject to the tides of students' ever-evolving self-identities as independent and expressive young people, subjugated to the push and pull of the expectations surrounding a composition degree. Suggestions for future research and implications for music education are provided.

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CHAPTER 1

In our lives we should embrace those moments when we are before beginnings (Rilke, 1923, p. 23).

Since the onset of my graduate career in music education, I was interested in the intersection between music education and the field of composition. In this study, I examined what experiences led certain young musicians to identify themselves strongly as composers. From my own experience I knew that my choice of composition as an undergraduate major was the result of numerous musical and non-musical influences. I wondered if investigating the trajectory of growth and experiences of young composers would help music educators enhance their understanding and preparation of young musicians in their own programs. In essence I questioned, what makes an undergraduate composer and how can that knowledge inform our practice as music educators?

Introduction

Educators and philosophers alike have long debated how and why we create music. Ever since Plato's dialogue, *The Ion,* in which he explored the nature of Homer's muse, music and creativity have been the source of much debate (Rowell, 1983). Hundreds of years since Plato's writing, researchers continue to question romantic notions concerning the nature of creativity and the process of artistic creation. Is all creativity formed from a mysterious flash of imagination? Or is there a slow period of gestation where after many attempts, a new vision or model takes form? How do new ideas, new ways of looking at the world, new types of organization, and new

models of beauty and truth spring into existence? What element of our humanity impels us to find new ways to communicate and express ourselves through music? For centuries philosophers, theorists, and academicians have explored the complexity of creativity, yet it still remains a source of wonderment, speculation, and puzzlement.

> Artistic creation is a process of simultaneous transformation of artist and materials (Dewey, 1958, p. 75).

Fortunately for the field of education, philosophers like John Dewey have eloquently expressed the intersections between philosophy, education, and the arts. As Dewey suggests, one of the fascinating aspects of artistic creation lies in the transformative quality of creativity. A multifaceted process, creativity is a dynamic progression of change engaging not only the innovative product or process, but also the pioneering individual himself. The creative sphere is one of growth and maturity; the product of creativity is not possible without an artist who develops, adapts, and morphs along with the product she designs. As creative individuals construct and generate new ideas within their craft they undergo transformation. Understanding the evolution and development of creative individuals is crucial to all of the arts, particularly in music education, as recent instructional trends increasingly emphasize creative activities (McCoy, 1999).

Reimer and Wright (1992) state: “Composers, educators, and aesthetic theorists have written extensively about creativity and have done so using the three perspectives of person, process, and product” (p. 255). However, as Tsisserev (1998) observed, most

research in music education has focused on the process and product with less attention placed on the person. Furthermore, when the *person* is studied, the emphasis is most often on the work and life of professional composers. With the exception of this focus on the lives of great composers, little attention has been given to understanding the developmental experience of young aspiring composers. The formative experiences in which young musicians first identify and adopt an identity as trained composers remain largely unexplored.

The Undergraduate Composer

Although a career in music composition is not predicated on earning a degree in music, or seeking formal musical training, in the United States, many musicians seeking composition instruction enroll in undergraduate programs to initiate their apprenticeship with professional composers. A seminal point in the process of becoming a composer is the declaration of composition as an undergraduate major. For young composers, this point is most likely the first time they formally classify or characterize themselves as composers. The choice to major in music composition is significant because the undergraduate experience provides a framework for not only learning technical procedures involved in the craft of composing, it solidifies how composers view themselves as artists. Undergraduate composers provide an insightful perspective into the process of becoming a trained composer. They are young enough to reflect on the experiences of their youth, yet old enough to understand that creating art in the academy requires more than a passion for composition.

Within all fields of study the word *creativity* is bound by myth and misunderstanding (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Miell and Macdonald (2000) debunk many romantic notions concerning the creative process of composers, including the myth of working in solitude to create a masterwork, as a myth that is inaccurate and misleading. They posit that composers' creative work is directly related to their day-to-day social interactions. The social influences of their family, peers, and mentor teachers all play dramatic roles in the way students perceive themselves as artists and composers, and their role in society (Hargreaves & North, 1997). For undergraduate composers, creative work is substantially influenced by the tremendous amount of personal growth, social maturation, and self-examination that typically occurs during the undergraduate experience (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Undergraduate composers are fully capable of articulating how they have decided to pursue composition as an undergraduate major. In sophisticated and nuanced ways, they can describe the influences, experiences, and developmental paths that are crucial in pursuing this field of musical study. Together, they comprise a clearly defined group of creative musicians whose formative experiences and thinking processes have not been studied in any depth.

Need for the Study

Several recent trends and movements in music education encourage the inclusion of creative musical practices in the classroom. This inclusion has resulted from a confluence of several trends in music education. First, methodologies like Orff and Dalcroze, which continue to gain broader acceptance in elementary music

education, emphasize creative music making. Second, classroom-based composition highlighted in the Comprehensive Musicianship (CM) movement, the Contemporary Music Project (CMP), and the Manhattanville Music Curriculum Project (MMCP), stress the importance of instructing beyond task-based performance skills. Lastly, the addition of composition as a standard in the *National Standards for Arts Education* (Music Educators National Conference, 1994) encourages the inclusion of composition within K-12 music education. The fourth of nine broad content standards states that teachers should encourage composition by using "a variety of traditional and non-traditional sound sources and electronic media when composing and arranging" (p. 43). Evolving methodologies, curricular movements, and recent national standards call for music educators to incorporate creative activities in meaningful ways within their classrooms (Kaschub, 1999; McCoy, 1999).

The inclusion of creative activities within the classroom has led academicians to review the intersections of creativity and music education. Two substantial literature reviews encapsulate the ways research in creativity has evolved over recent decades in reference to music education. In 1992, Webster summarized numerous empirical research articles regarding creative thinking and music. Webster highlighted many problems involved with defining and framing creative processes while giving specific consideration to musical creativity and assessment. Webster's search for literature regarding creative thinking included general psychology-psychometric, cognitive, and environmental research as well as assessment, content analysis (product), process, improvisation, and analysis/learning. In a later review of literature relating to creative

thinking, Hickey (2002) extended Webster's review and broadened the field of research in creativity to include not only music, but also visual arts, theater, and dance. Hickey presented compelling issues in creativity research and how they might influence future research agendas in music education. She suggests that while researchers have made tremendous inroads into understanding creativity through quantitative assessment and cognitive studies, there are many areas of creativity research that require further attention. Specifically, she cites the need for more in-depth, qualitative research that addresses developmental trends in artistic creativity.

In his dissertation study, Tsisserev (1998) noted that while extensive work has explored how young people compose, few researchers examine *why* young people compose. Additionally, Tsisserev cites this lack of research as an obstacle preventing music educators from nurturing and cultivating potentially creative musicians. Furthermore, Tsisserev cited a lack of research in music education that focuses on social and cultural dynamics that influence an aspiring young composer. Tsisserev is not alone in calling for a more socially-based examination of musicians' development. This call mirrors a recent trend in research practices that utilizes a sociological lens to examine the role of music in individuals' lives (Hargreaves & North, 1997).

Identity Development and Music

Musical Identities (Macdonald, Hargreaves, & Miell, 2002) is one of the most recent research texts to describe the intersection of social psychology, identity development, and musicianship. Macdonald, Hargreaves, and Miell explicate a

common thread in current music psychology—the value of understanding the role of music in the construction of one's identity. They suggest that by examining *musical identity* researchers can further understand music experiences "from the inside" (p. 7). Furthermore, Macdonald and his colleagues state that although biological predispositions play a large role in development, the role of socialization in musical identity development is equally, if not more, important. Social influences that individuals encounter in their everyday lives play a large role in identity development. These social influences form "an integral part of those identities rather than merely providing the framework or context within which they develop, and this perspective enables us to explain identities in music" (p. 7). Specifically, they describe how musicians develop identity in two distinct ways: either by *identifying in music* (IIM), or utilizing *music in identities* (MII) (p. 2). They categorize *identifying in music* (IIM), as "aspects of musical identities that are socially defined within any given cultural roles and musical categories" (p. 2); whereas music in identities (MII) "focuses on how we use music as a means or resource for developing other aspects of our individual identities" (p. 2). Music in identities (MII), for example, helps or facilitates individuals in defining gender roles, national identity, youth identity, or the identity of special needs persons.

Several researchers have begun examining how identity construction influences the development of specific musical roles. Davidson (2002) examined the concept of a *performance identity* by considering the notion of "being a performer and asking what makes a performer?" (p. 97). Davidson broadened and built upon recent research by

O'Neill (2002) and Hargreaves and North (1997) relating the role of self-identity to how people define themselves as musicians. Davidson (2002) extended sociological research on music and identity development to examine ways in which young musicians define their unique musical roles, specifically as solo performers. Purposely, Davidson utilized trends in musical identity research to question how young musicians develop an identity as a solo performer within traditional Western traditions.

In order to delineate a *solo performer's identity,* Davidson deconstructs the notion of "being a performer" (p. 97). Davidson suggests that there is no one, absolute solo performance identity; instead, musicians have a unique set of characteristics that defines their performance experience and the way they perceive themselves within a musical context. Based on her experience as a performer, and her past research on solo performers, Davidson identifies five categories for framing and understanding a solo performance identity. The five categories include: 1) influences of environmental factors on the development of the solo performer, 2) casual but frequent exposure to music and performance context, 3) role of key others, 4) motivation and personality to perform, and 5) motivation and personality to change. A more detailed review of Davidson's study is provided in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. This work is important to my research because it provides both a precedent for researching a specific musical identity and a framework for examining the identity of undergraduate composers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine undergraduate students' compositional identity. The intent of the study is to provide a rich representation of undergraduate composers' experiences to better understand their development, beliefs, and perspectives. Ultimately, I hope to portray a broad picture of these undergraduate composers' growth and development in order to further music educators' understanding of the creative identity.

Defining and Framing Undergraduate Compositional Identity

In this study, I explored the concept of undergraduate compositional identity by examining the development, experience, and compositional style of undergraduate composers. From a previously completed pilot study I found that Davidson's first three categories that elucidate a solo performance identity also profoundly influenced undergraduate composers. Therefore, I focused on the first three categories Davidson described as primary factors of musical identity development: 1) environmental factors, 2) casual but frequent exposure to music and performance contexts, and 3) role of key others. However, while Davidson only specifically addressed environmental factors as momentous and memorable life experiences that substantially impact the perspective of a young musician, I extend the category to also include issues such as socioeconomic realities, geographic location, and home life. Davidson's last two categories of motivation and personality are given less attention due to the narrow scope of this current study. However, in Chapter 4, I hope to provide the reader with a broad sense of

each undergraduate composer's uniqueness and individuality that are similarly addressed in Davidson's latter two categories.

While Davidson's work (2002) provided a precedent for examining a specific musical identity, this research will differ in two distinct ways. First, this study targeted a specific age group that is associated with typical undergraduate students. Davidson never specifies a specific age group when exploring a solo performer's identity. Second, there are inherent differences between being a performer and being a composer. The goal of this research was not to make a comparison between the two, but inherent differences were accounted for. The most obvious difference between an undergraduate compositional identity and a solo performance identity is the role of creativity that is associated with the act of writing and creating music.

The latter two research questions utilized in this study (stated below) address this difference. By attending to *compositional voice* in the second and third research questions, I sought to examine the ways undergraduate composers describe their individual soundscape. More importantly, I attended to the ways their past experiences and current day-to-day influences shape their personal compositional voice or writing styles. Although asking students to describe their compositional voice suggested that I was focusing on issues of creative process rather than the composer herself, this is not the case. I believe that discussing the experience of *becoming* an undergraduate composer is not complete without including the composers' descriptions of growth and maturation in creative processes and compositions. Therefore, in this study,

undergraduate composers were asked to describe their experiences writing and revising music to obtain a fuller awareness of their musical development and experience.

In summary, this study mirrored and extends Davidson's work in a number of ways. Davidson, a performer, draws upon her musical knowledge to help illuminate the experience of being a performer. Similarly, my expertise as a composer allowed me to articulate and clarify the experiences of undergraduate composition majors. Second, like Davidson, I wished to extend research by Hargreaves and North (1997) and Macdonald, Hargreaves, and Miell (2002) that addressed the intersections between individuals' lives and watershed musical moments that lead to a confident classification of themselves as composers. Third, Davidson questioned 'what makes a performer?' to identify the experience of being a solo performer. Using her research as a model, I investigated the musical identity of undergraduate composers by asking 'what makes an undergraduate composer?'

Framing the Research Questions

The central phenomenon and research question that guided this study was: *What comprises an undergraduate compositional identity?* Influenced by the recent work of Davidson (2002), I recognized that undergraduate compositional identity was formed through a convergence of formative life experiences, musical development, and the influence of key others. This study builds upon work completed in the pilot project that identified major influences in the lives of undergraduate composition majors. Three

subsidiary questions were developed to focus on the construction of an undergraduate compositional identity:

1. What do the students identify as the features that lead to their compositional identity?

Three of the principal factors that Davidson described as highly influential to music identity development were also evident within the experiences of undergraduate composers. The three major themes that I focus on in this research are: 1) influences of environmental factors, 2) casual but frequent exposure to music, and 3) role of key others. The three overarching categories of musical identity development provide an appropriate scaffolding to the series of small trends I noted when interviewing the undergraduate composers. The themes are listed within Table 1.1.

Table 1.1.

Overarching categories of music identity with emerging sub-themes.

Environmental Factors	Exposure to Music	Role of Key Others
Schools Attended Family Background Access to Lessons Access to Cultural Events	Participation in Ensembles Concerts Attended Influence of College Choice of Principal Instrument	Valued Others Sense of Self in Social Setting Socially Constructed Notions of Roles as a Composer

2. *How do undergraduate composers describe their compositional voice or style?*

The field of composition is unique within musical study because it is inherently creative. The push or desire to write in a distinctive style was unmistakable when interviewing the participants. Unlike a performance identity, a compositional identity is heavily influenced by the need to find one's own voice and create a distinctive style. Furthermore, for some composers, their compositional style is highly personal and emotional, while for others style is mathematical, distant, and formulaic. This question highlights many technical considerations composers may feel important to their work.

3. What do the students identify as influences on their style?

This question illuminates how composers view their own writing and provides insight into their role of outside influences on their own creative development. For some composers, musical decisions are entirely free (or so they claim), while others admittedly borrow styles and techniques they admire from other composers. This question not only speaks to issues of compositional decision making, it helps the reader view the way a undergraduate views himself within the larger context of the musical academy and the field of music as a whole.

The Northwestern University Center for the Study of Education and the Musical Experience (CSEME)

> The notion of the musical idea as a product of inspiration leads naturally to creativity, the creative process, and the nature of the creative person. Composers, educators, and aesthetic theorists have written extensively about

> creativity and have done so using the three perspectives of person, process, and product. (Reimer & Wright, 1992, p. 255)

The Center for the Study of Education and the Musical Experience is comprised of music education faculty and doctoral students at Northwestern University. Founded by Dr. Bennett Reimer, one mission of CSEME is to provide graduate students with a regular source of research training, professional enrichment, and communal support. This training and support helps doctoral students write dissertations that focus on the Center's central mission to research "the nature of musical experience and the ways it could be cultivated through education" (p. viii). The epigraph above comes from one of the Center's most influential publications, *On the Nature of Musical Experience* (1992). In this study, I intended to further inquiry on the creative process and the musical experience, which is a large body of research within the CSEME at Northwestern University. Specifically, I address what Reimer and Wright describe as the "nature of the creative person" by questioning what makes an undergraduate compositional identity. To date, much of the research created by the Center that has examined creativity has focused on perspectives of process and product, with less attention being placed on the point of view of the person. This dissertation seeks to extend previous CSEME research that investigates the nature of creativity and the musical experience while highlighting the experiences of undergraduate composers.

Hickey (1995) was one of the first doctoral students to examine the creative process of young people. Hickey studied the relationships between creative musical thought processes of children and the creative qualities of their resulting musical

compositions. She found that “while children can indeed think creatively in music while performing music and listening to music, composing music is an authentic musical behavior in which the primary activity involves divergent and creative manipulation of musical sounds and ideas” (p. 221). Daignault (1996) addressed how students composed when using computers to aid the composition/improvisation process. He found that students who engage compositionally with a product driven mindset were scored as being more creative than those students who were more concerned with process. Daignault also found that students with prior piano experience function at high levels of both craft (development strategy) and maturity of improvisation. Younker (1997) examined strategies utilized by 8-, 11-, and 14- year-old students completing composition exercises. Younker recorded and evaluated verbal responses of students engaged in composition and found that patterns and strategies of composition varied between age groups. Younker found nine themes that emerged from the data: elements of music, concepts, expressive gestures, composing process, incorporation of known material, non-composing process, technological problems, outlier verbal responses, and outside influences. Kaschub (1999) examined differences between individual and group compositional processes and products and concluded that collaborative compositional processes were distinctly different from individual processes of composition. McCoy (1999) evaluated how varying compositional assignments not only impact the quality of students’ composing, but also influence students’ attitudes toward the creative process. Strand (2003) observed students in a general music classroom to determine how instruction affects students’ compositional practices and perspectives. She found that

the transfer of ideas gained from music listening and performance into their creative vocabulary was intricate and complex. Each of the dissertations presented here vary greatly in the scope of research questions and methodology, yet each contributes to a growing core of research concerning composition and the musical experience. This study is set apart because it focuses on those who have not only chosen a compositional role, but have chosen composition as a profession.

Pilot Study—What Makes an Undergraduate Composer?

Several methodological texts (Creswell, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994) encourage the use of pilot studies to test interview questions, participant selection, coding themes, and verification procedures (Creswell, 2005). Persuaded by their writing, many research procedures developed in the pilot study were further expanded upon in this study. The pilot study, completed in 2006, included two Northwestern University undergraduate composition majors who were interviewed over a two-month period. Four interviews with each student were recorded and transcribed. After several readings, I coded data into several large categories, a process Creswell calls "open coding" (1998). From the pilot research I derived several codes or themes that helped shape the current theoretical framework. The first theme to emerge from pilot data included the strong role of social influences on composers' description of their identity as musicians. Specifically, both composers discussed the enormous role of their early surroundings when detailing watershed moments in their musical development. Davidson (2002) refers to the early encounters and experiences that shape a young

musician's perspective of creating music as "influences of environmental factors" (p. 98).

A second theme to emerge from interviewing the undergraduate composers in the pilot was the role of early musical experiences as students formed a strong interest in music. Both composers I interviewed talked extensively about their early experiences performing with an elementary band ensemble. They described the importance of performing and being part of an ensemble both in terms of the musical impact on their development and for the positive social outlet a performing group provided. Davidson categorizes these influences as "casual and frequent exposure to music and performance context" (p. 99).

Lastly, both composers I interviewed described the powerful role that parents, teachers, and colleagues play in their development. Although both composers I interviewed in the pilot were in their early 20's, they still reflected on and greatly relied upon their social network for validation and support. When describing defining moments in their experiences of *becoming* a composer, both participants stressed the importance of key others who gave them encouragement, support, and confirmation. Similarly, Davidson cites the important *role of key others* when outlining a solo performance identity. Davidson found that influences of parents, teachers, and colleagues are often overshadowed by researchers' focus on innate musical abilities and aptitude. In conclusion, the influences of environmental factors, casual but frequent exposure to music, and valued key others, were all prominent themes found both in

Davidson's examination of solo performers and my pilot study in which I interviewed undergraduate composers.

Methodology

In this study I utilized a purposeful sampling strategy to select participants. Undergraduate composers were chosen from a small university in the Northeast. By evaluating students who attend a highly competitive university, I only involved participants who expressed a serious commitment to music composition. Furthermore, by selecting students who attended the same university, I focused on the uniqueness of the individuals rather than distinctions that may result from studying composition at different institutions. All undergraduate composers who attended the university were asked to take part in the study; four students agreed to participate. A smaller sample was utilized in order to illuminate the distinctive, subtle, and intimate details of undergraduate composers' identity.

From conducting the pilot study, I realized that a narrative approach was needed to fully explicate the personal details of each undergraduate composer's experience. Narrative inquiry allows for a global, multidimensional account of each participant's story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Creswell (2005) states, "narrative research designs are qualitative procedures in which researchers describe the life of an individual " (p. 53). In this study, I draw upon ideas from narrative research to represent the developmental paths of the composers in narrative form. Providing a narrative account not only offers a perspective of each participant's personal experiences, it provides an

excellent underpinning for case study research. In this study, the experience of each undergraduate composer is considered as the individual case and the narrative design elucidates the intricacies of each composer's story.

Following guidelines for case study research presented in Creswell (2005), data were collected by: 1) conducting 6 interviews with each participant; 2) obtaining samples of their compositions; 3) collecting composers' journal responses to each interview; and 4) obtaining other information the individual composer may have felt important in describing herself.

Data sources included fieldnotes, journal entries, interview transcripts, and other related documents. Data analysis procedures followed guidelines set forth by Glesne (2006) which included: 1) multiple readings of all transcripts; 2) constructing a coding map to examine emerging themes; and 3) re-reading the transcripts in order to extract excerpts that support salient issues. This process continued until primary and secondary themes were identified and supported with excerpts from the data.

To further examine the confirmability of emerging themes, a cross-case analysis was completed. Cross case analyses support and reinforce themes that emerge from individual cases. Additionally, "multiple cases not only pin down the specific conditions under which a finding will occur but also help us form the more general categories of how those conditions may be related" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 173). Cross-case data analysis was completed according to guidelines set forth by Creswell (2005) and mirrored the process used in the single case analysis.

In order to establish validity I followed several qualitative procedures outlined in Creswell (2005), including triangulation, member checking, reflexivity, and external audit. The first procedure, triangulation, was supported by the use of multiple data sources including the students' interviews, compositions, and reflections. Member checking was accomplished by asking the undergraduate composers to read the data along with my interpretation to confirm the credibility of the transcription and analysis.

Reflexive procedures encourage researchers to be forthright about beliefs and biases that may shape their perspectives. Given my experience as a composer, it is inevitable that I have biases toward the field of music composition. In order to be transparent about my biases, I provided reflexive notes that allow the reader to observe my predispositions during data analysis. Finally, because of my position as an insider within the field of music composition I employed an external audit. The external audit consisted of a university professor, who is proficient in qualitative techniques, yet outside the field of music composition, to review samples of data collection and analysis. Suggestions made by the external auditor were integrated into my data analysis procedures.

The Six Interviews

> The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations. (Kvale, 1996, p. 1)

The interview protocols for this research were constructed during the pilot study. Following guidelines for qualitative interviews provided by Kvale (1996), I utilized a semistructured research protocol. Semistructured interviews began with preplanned questions that focused on a particular theme. Yet, in each interview there "is an openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions to allow for follow up to answers given and the stories told by the subjects" (p. 124). A semistructured interview fosters an interpersonal relationship between the interviewer and the subject and encourages a free dialogue between two partners who share a mutual interest. In this research I conducted six, semistructured interviews, with each participant interview focusing on a specific research theme. Each interview posed questions that illuminated prominent issues that emerged from the pilot study. The sequence of the interviews and the prominent themes are described below.

The focus of the first interview was to gain awareness of students' personal histories, as well as descriptions of past educational and musical experiences. The second interview surveyed how students describe their experience of entering the academy on both the technical and affective parts of their writing. Additionally, the interview addressed how students describe themselves in relation to their undergraduate musical experience. The third interview concentrated on how past musical and non-musical experiences influence participants' views of their current and future stage of compositional maturity. Specific themes to be addressed were: 1) sense of self in social and historical contexts, 2) clarification of self-concept, 3) sense of self from valued others, and 4) understanding of one's culture. The fourth interview centered on the

writing of each composer in order to explicate themes that emerged from participants' descriptions of current and past compositions. Themes included the subject's sense of self in response to feedback from valued others and socially constructed notions of composer's roles. The fifth interview focused on the subject's view of his/her future vocational aspirations. Topics covered within the fifth interview include the students' perception of socially constructed musical roles as well as integration into perceived musical roles. The sixth interview was a reprise of the first five, providing an opportunity to explore issues that required further clarification. This interview allowed students to share personal reflections they had toward the research experience. During the pilot study I observed that students wanted to return to previous questions in earlier interviews in order to further clarify and explain themselves. The sixth interview provided an opportunity for reflection for both the participant and myself. Appendix A contains detailed listing of questions posed in the six interviews.

My Experience as a Composer

Undoubtedly, my personal experiences as a composer influenced this research. My perspective as a composer shapes every aspect of my life. I view, describe, analyze, and process life experiences through a composer's lens. From my earliest experiences with music I always identified with creating rather than performing music. At the age of six I began playing folk guitar, studying with a bluegrass, banjo player in rural Virginia. My teacher, Buddy Holt, was a vibrant, larger than life personality who encouraged me to sing and write songs. His love of music was infectious, and soon I began practicing

for long periods of time to gain his approval. Buddy's perspective of not just *performing* music, but playing *with* music, had a profound and lasting influence on the way I perceived music making. As I grew older and began studying the piano, trumpet, and violin, I tended to focus on playing with the sound of the instrument rather than playing notes on a page; this trend has followed me through my adult life. As I completed my undergraduate degree in music education, and later my master's degree in composition, I became increasing interested in linking my awareness of composition with music education. Some might view my experience as a composer as an impediment to impartial research. However, my commitment to music composition continues to fuel my desire to understand the creative musical spirit. By examining the development of undergraduate composers I hope to continue unlocking the mysterious, often indescribable role music plays in our lives.

Overview of the Study

Chapter 2 will contain the review of literature. The literature will be organized around three major topics that form the foundation of this study: 1) music identity research; 2) research on individuals as composers; and 3) the culture of the composer within the academy. Methodology is described in Chapter 3. This chapter includes a description of participant selection process and interview protocol. Procedures for site selection, gaining entry, and data sources are presented. Furthermore, I address coding methodologies and account for methods of triangulation and establishing trustworthiness. Finally, a description of data interpretation and analysis is offered.

Chapter 4 includes a narrative account of each undergraduate composer and provides the reader with a comprehensive view of each participant. Chapter 5 provides within-case and cross case analyses of the participants. Finally, Chapter 6 presents implications for additional research and practice.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The presentation of related literature in this chapter is divided into three sections. Each section supports part of the larger concept of an undergraduate compositional identity. First, I focus on music identity research within the framework of social psychology. Next, I address research on composition and music education with an emphasis on individuals as composers. Lastly, I review literature that describes the current culture of the composer in the academy.

Music Identity Research

The topic of identity has been addressed in numerous disciplines including anthropology, sociology, history, political science, cognitive science, cultural studies, education, gender studies, and psychology (Benham, 2004; Hargreaves, 1986b). Regardless of academic discipline, researchers use the concept of identity to frame the ways individuals view themselves and their relation to society. "When the modifier of music is added to the notions of identity and identity construction the research spectrum narrows, but still includes the fields of ethnomusicology, music psychology, social psychology of music, musicology, acoustics, and psychometrics" (Benham, 2004, p. 31).

The body of research concerning identity and identity construction is large, even when limited to the scope of music research. Consequently, within this chapter I focus

on research themes related to social psychology and music with emphasis on the individual and identity. This section begins with a brief historical overview of music research and social psychology. Next, I describe current trends in music and social psychology research within the past 15 years. Subsequently, I describe the emergence of identity research, specifically focusing on the concept of 'musical identities' as defined by Macdonald, Hargreaves, and Miell (2002). At the end of this section, I describe factors that influence the construction of musical identities and review important work in this area.

Historical Overview of Music Research and Social Psychology

In the early 1970s music researchers began examining how individuals' social and cultural surroundings influence their music experiences (Hargreaves, Marshall, & North, 2003). Until this time, the role of culture and its influence on the ways music was perceived, acted upon, and taught was neglected by psycho-musicological studies (Farnsworth, 1969). Paul Farnsworth was one of the early pioneers of sociological research and music; his work was considered groundbreaking in the 1970s and even today is often noted as the genesis of music identity research (Hargreaves & North, 1997). Although music researchers did not immediately embrace Farnsworth's approach, his ideas foreshadowed an emerging line of social psychological research (1997).

In the mid-1980s there was a surge of interest in social psychology and music; correspondingly, "the field of music psychology began radical transformation"

(Hargreaves, Marshall, & North, 2003, p. 2). Researchers became increasingly disenchanted with the restrictive experimental approaches prevalent within cognitive psychology at that time. They began examining the ways real-life experiences shaped the various components of a musician's progress and perspective. It was also during this time that three major strands of music psychology began to unfold—cognitive, developmental, and social (p. 147). Davies (1978) and Deustch (1982) were influential in disseminating, categorizing, and defining music psychology during this initial period.

According to Sloboda (1986), by the middle of the 1980s substantial research existed to define a new paradigm for psychology and music that emphasized social issues. Sloboda names the following five markers that contributed to the emergence of a social-based field of research in music psychology:

> An agreed set of central problems; agreed methods for working on the problems; agreed theoretical frameworks in which to discuss them; techniques and theories which are specific to the paradigm; research that is appropriate to the whole range of phenomena in the domain being studied. (p. 199)

Sloboda was not alone in advocating for new ways to connect social psychology and music. Hargreaves (1986a) called for researchers to exit the controlled environment of the laboratory where issues of memory, attention, and representation were studied to explore more contextual issues such as the emotional effects of music, expressiveness in performance, and creativity in composition and improvisation. In a time when music psychology was dominated by psychometric and acoustical studies, Hargreaves argued that a more contextual, social approach to musical understanding was required. He

pressed for social psychology to close the gap between theoretical insights on individuals' musical development and the real-life experiences that influence the musical experience. The researcher's call for socially-based research was answered in resounding ways as the body of work underwent tremendous growth and expansion during the 1990s (Hargreaves, Marshall, & North, 2003).

Current Trends in Music Research and Social Psychology Research

Subsequent work in the past 15 years has promoted the use of socially-based research to examine how real-life experiences, which have societal, emotional, and cognitive elements, influence musicians' growth and development (Hargreaves & North, 1997, 1999, 2003). Studies of societal influences in music development include such topics as musical tastes and society (Price, 1986; Russell, 1997); musical tastes of adolescents (Eliot, 1989; Frith, 1983); and environmental factors influencing performance skill (Davidson, 1993; Howe, 1990; Levitin, 1994). The role of emotion in the musical experience has been addressed by studies on performance anxiety (Brotons, 1994; Clark, 1989; Wills & Cooper, 1988); introversion/extroversion (Stelmack, 1990); and sensitivity (Kemp, 1996; Myers & McCaulley, 1985). Lastly, research addressing cognitive factors includes such topics as impact of aging on musical thinking (Simonton, 1980, 1986, 1997), and technical proficiency (Davidson, Howe, & Sloboda, 1997).

Concept of Identity

Throughout the late 1980s and 1990s interest in the concept of identity grew in popularity among those who study music and musicians from a social perspective. Drawing upon the work of Vygotsky and Mead, researchers turned their attention to the self, investigating the self in formation rather than viewing the self as a static, fixed set of characteristics or attributes. Macdonald, Hargreaves, and Miell (2002) note this change in research:

> The concept of *identity* enables us to look at the widespread and varied interactions between music and the individual. The concept of identity and the self have undergone some radical changes in psychological theory in recent years….The idea of the self as a kind of focus, or relatively unchanging core aspect of individuals' personalities, has given way to a much less static and more dynamic view of the self as something which is constantly being reconstructed and renegotiated according to the experiences, situations, and other people with whom we interact in every day life. (p. 2)

Due to the dynamic ways people use music to delineate and express themselves, the concept of identity is of particular interest to those who study the musical experience. "We not only use it to regulate our own everyday moods and behaviors, but also to present ourselves to others in the ways we prefer" (p. 1). Examining the role of identity helps researchers frame how music shapes, informs, and influences our lives in limitless and ever-evolving ways.

Drawing upon the ever-growing interest and popularity of identity research, Macdonald, Hargreaves, and Miell (2002) posit that a new way of considering social-psychological research has emerged. This new approach considers not only the ways social factors influence musical development, but also the ways these factors allow individuals to construct and reconstruct their own musical identities throughout their lives. In essence musical identities allow social psychologists to examine "identity as something we *do* rather than something we *are*" (O'Neill, 2002, p. 80).

Concept of Musical Identities

Hargreaves, Marshall, and North suggest: "The attraction of this formulation [musical identity] is not only that it represents a way in which the social perspective is built into individual development, but it can also start to explain how individuals view themselves" (2003, p. 153). Musical identity research focuses on the way individuals define and present themselves in musical contexts (e.g., "I am a pianist") and mark themselves by their musical preferences (e.g., "I listen to classical"). Consequently, research involving music and identity can be considered in two distinct categories. The first category is labeled *identities in music* (IIM)[1]. An identity in music (IIM) refers to socially defined, culturally prescribed musical identities. The authors state "the ways in which young people do or do not define themselves as musicians, for example, and the role of specific influences such as the school and the family are central reference points

[1] The abbreviations of IIM for *identities in music*, and MII for *music in identities* are given by Macdonald, Hargreaves, & Miell (2002).

for young people's self concepts with respect to music" (p. 2). These cultural reference points define how the roles of musician, composer, performer, improviser, and teacher are perceived. "The ways in which humans view themselves in relation to these culturally defined roles are at the heart of our concept of identities in music" (p. 13).

The second conceptual distinction is categorized as *music in identities* (MII). Music in identities describes how individuals utilize music as a means or resource for defining components of identity in a broad social context. Music in identities refers to ways music connects individuals to a series of subcultures and communities. The authors suggest that musical identities are constructed and reconstructed by making comparisons with other people, and the process of restructuring and re-evaluating one's identity continues throughout one's life.

Factors in Music Identity Formation

In this section, I present factors that shape the formation of musical identities through the selected work of researchers who have done important work in this field. According to Macdonald et al., factors frequently examined in musical identity research, specifically IIM, include environmental factors, musical exposure, education opportunities, and individual disposition. In this section, I focus on research pertaining to music identity formation and environmental factors including: parents and motivation, parents' knowledge of music, role of family, role of musical preferences, and school environments. To address music in identity formation (MII), research on gender roles and early formative musical experiences is described. Lastly, I define

various forms of musical identities before providing detailed description of Davidson's research (2002) that meaningfully shaped the construction of this study.

Environmental Factors

Influences of the home. A supportive home environment during childhood and adolescence is essential to the formative development of musicians (Davidson, 2002; Davidson, Howe, & Sloboda, 1997; Geen, Beatty, & Arkin, 1984; Goertzal, Goertzal, & Goertzal, 1978; Russell, 1997). From multiple viewpoints, researchers have examined issues of family history and home life. Specifically, the role of parents in formative musical development is ubiquitous within this body of research.

A study by Borthwick and Davidson (2002) suggests that a child's motivation to excel musically is stimulated when parents actively participate in musical activities. They note a positive correlation between the time parents spent engaging in their children's musical experiences, and a child's musical achievement. Similarly, Davidson (2002) states that children who had higher performance skills also had parents who encouraged their performing at family gathering or other social events. Davidson suggests that the positive reinforcement young people receive from parents in social settings fosters a sense of being exceptional. Consequently, this positive feedback from parents motivates children to seek out other performance opportunities.

According to numerous researchers, a positive home environment is more important to children's' musical development than the knowledge or ability of their parents (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002; Csikszentmihalyi, 2004; Rathunde & Whalen,

1997). Rathunde and Whalen (1997) suggest parents' previous exposure or knowledge of music is not always an indicator of a child's musical skill. They state, "children who developed musical skills often had musical parents who sat through all of their practice and lessons" (p. 99). The only factor that was indicative of a child's success was the involvement of parents in the student's early musical training.

Often the structure of the family, including the size of the family, influences an individual's musical experiences. According to Borthwick and Davidson (2002), the number of children in a family can shape early musical decisions that influence musical taste and musical roles. They explain that due to the need for siblings to distinguish themselves from each other, they will often select a musical role or genre that is not shared by others in their family. For example, if a sibling listens to one style of music on the radio, the other child will intentionally choose another station as a favorite. Furthermore, if an individual has a sibling who excels at performing, other family members will often refrain from describing themselves as performers, or performing in front of others. In summary, music allows children to distinguish themselves from their siblings while providing an outlet for early individual expression.

Borthwick and Davidson (2002) studied how the belief systems of certain family members sway the attitudes and values of children's developing musical identities. After extensive interviews with numerous families, the researchers suggest that there is not a one-way relationship between one family member influencing another. They forward that musical identities of both the adult family member and that of the child evolve simultaneously. In this way, a family's attitudes, and expectations

influence musical identity development across multiple generations. Although children expose their parents to new musical forms, the parents have dominant influence over subsequent generations' musical preferences. Furthermore, "the initial blueprint of expectation for musical development is either amended or replicated in the next generation depending on the levels of musical satisfaction experienced by each parent during his or her childhood" (p. 76). Finally, the researchers present evidence that the combination of the parents' family histories, emergent expectations, and role allocations within the family all play an essential role in defining an individual's musical identity.

Supportive parents and siblings are also important in developing the self-esteem of children. Because of the nature of performance, musical identity and self-esteem are often intertwined. Davidson (1997) describes how a positive home environment that nurtures creativity empowers children and encourages a positive mindset towards performing. Furthermore, she addresses the notion of "showing off" (p. 111), as an integral part of the motivation to perform. She concludes that successful performers are those who are able to demonstrate, at a young age, a strong performance personality, essentially showing off in a culturally appropriate manner. The confidence that enables children to perform comfortably is often the result of an encouraging home life where showing off is valued and promoted.

In her previous research, Davidson (1993) also found evidence of an internalized motivation for performing in young children. For some children, as their peers began to lose interest and stop participating in musical activities, they continued

to express an internal drive to continue performing. She speculates that this is one of the first clear signs of a young person's intrinsic motivation to perform music.

Roe (1985, 1987) studied whether an adolescent's musical preferences are a result of home life, peer influence, or other factors. According to Roe (1987), family life and peers do influence students' musical preferences; however, the most significant indicator or marker of musical preference was academic achievement, but not in the same way for all students. Students who excel academically are more likely to listen to mainstream music, including art music[2]. Conversely, students who struggle academically often identify with popular music that favors topics of rebellion. In this way music acts as a marker, allowing adolescents to identify and conform to peers of similar academic interests.

Utilizing socioeconomic status as a framework, Lewis (1992) also examined how music can act as a marker for identifying and presenting oneself. His study of adolescents examined how environment, mainly socioeconomic surroundings, influenced musical preferences. Lewis states that musical preferences, along with style of dress and manner of speech, mark a socioeconomic identification for individuals. Formative musical preferences, which are shaped by financial opportunities, have lasting consequences. Musical preferences that are chosen during adolescence are often consistent throughout adulthood. For example, if a young person listens and identifies with jazz music at an early age, he is likely to be a lifelong connoisseur of jazz music.

[2] Throughout this study I use the term *art music* to reference musical styles that encompass what is traditionally considered classical.

Lewis determined that musical preferences are linked to socioeconomic status; however, the reasons behind the connections were unclear. He speculates whether economic opportunities allow wealthier families to identify with classical music or, whether wealthier families identify with classical music as a means to demonstrate their social standing. Lewis calls for more research that examines whether music preferences are chosen by individuals to mark their socioeconomic status or if financial limitations or opportunities designate musical preferences.

Similarly, Tarrant, North, and Hargreaves (2002) investigated the degree to which young individuals' environments, both formal and informal, influenced their musical experiences and self-identity. In this study, the authors reviewed previous research utilizing the lens of social identity theory (SIT) to yield prominent themes concerning musical identity development of adolescents. Prominent themes found from the literature review included: 1) crisis of identity; 2) impact of the media; 3) values and beliefs; and 4) prominence of peers and self-evaluation. The authors state:

> Working within the framework of social identity theory, we have shown how by engaging in social comparisons, adolescents are able to portray their own peer groups in their network, and thus able to portray their own groups more positively than other groups in their network, and are thus able to sustain positive self evaluations. Whilst we are not suggesting that the engagement with music is the only means by which adolescents achieve this, it does seem the music can play a prominent role in this respect. (p. 147)

Tarrant, North, and Hargreaves demonstrated how young people's musical behavior was guided not only by individual identity needs, but also by the needs of the group with which they associate. The crisis of identity in adolescence was mediated through musical preferences and choices to assimilate or reject specific social groups or subcultures. Additionally, the role of media was apparent in young people's description of their musical preferences, but the degree of influence was unclear. Lastly, the authors suggest that peers play a large role in individuals' self-esteem. As a result, young people demonstrated substantial concern for gaining approval from their peers when discussing their musical preferences.

School environments. Thus far, I have presented research that examined family and peer influences. Yet, for most young people their first significant musical experiences occur in school environments (Olsson, 1997). In this way, school environments significantly shape how individuals define their early formative musical identities. Referring to the importance of school environments, Lamont (2002) states:

> One change in Western children's lives that may have an important impact in identity occurs around the age of 4 or 5 years, when children begin to come into contact with many more children of the same age at nursery school and school. Before this, children's social identities are shaped largely by their family circumstances. They define themselves in relation to other people within the micro system of their home, which tends to be a relatively restricted group of parents, siblings, relatives and family friends. (p. 43)

Within the school environment, the role of teacher is fundamental in shaping the way music is perceived, judged, and valued by children (Folkestad, 2002). Furthermore, the activities and discourse in the music classroom influence children's view of themselves as musicians. For example, Plummeridge (1991) suggested that young children are capable of making self-assessments concerning their capacity as musicians or non-musicians. This assessment is common in elementary music classrooms where the emphasis is based primarily on vocal instruction. Furthermore, music teachers often unknowingly reinforce children's self-assessments by providing obvious encouragement to those who demonstrate proficiency while ignoring those who are not as advanced. Plummeridge stated that teachers promote the conventional definition of 'musician' as skilled performer by emphasizing a performance based approach in the classroom.

Lamont and Tarrant (2002) found a similar theme when investigating the musical experiences of students attending two secondary schools. The students in the first school demonstrated above average levels of academic achievement as measured by standardized exams. The first school also offered a wide variety of after school, extra-curricular music activities. In contrast, the second school offered no after school music programs and students scored below average scores on standardized exams. Lamont and Tarrant assert that school environment does influence the way students describe themselves as musicians. In the first school, which offered more musical activities, students were less likely to describe themselves as musicians. In the second school, which offered virtually no music instruction, students were more likely to

identify themselves as active music makers. The authors conjecture that students receiving more instruction were less likely to identify as musicians because they associate the term 'musician' with a proficient performer. In contrast, students in the second school considered any form of music making worthy of the term musician.

Recent research has also addressed the way the undergraduate experience plays a role in an individual's musical development. O'Neill (2002) examined the way undergraduate musicians described their experiences as performers during their final year of study. O'Neill questioned how the stressful performing environment that surrounded performance majors in their senior year is mitigated both before and after their senior recital. She closely followed students' conversations to monitor their feelings toward musical performance and being a performer. O'Neill states that participants who describe performing as a conflict or battle are more likely to feel as if they are in control of the performance. Other participants who described a sense of hopefulness or a 'wait and see' attitude toward their performing were more likely to view themselves as victims. In summary, students with strong self-images and positive, take-charge attitudes best navigate the stressful performing environment that surrounds undergraduate performance majors. O'Neill's work is important because it is one of the few examples of research that describes pressures musicians face in undergraduate musical programs.

Music In Identities

As previously stated, the concept of musical identity not only applies to the way music shapes individual identity formation (IIM), it can also describe the way people identify with groups, traditions, and cultures. Music in identities (MII), for example, helps or facilitates individuals in defining national identity, gender roles, and youth identity, among others.

National Identity

Folkestad (2002) examined the ways music serves as a marker to establish a national identity. He suggests that watching the broadcasts of Olympic games can provide a clear example of music supporting a national identity. For example, throughout the Sydney Olympics, sounds from a didgeridoo were prevalent throughout the broadcast. In this case, the didgeridoo was as a cultural or national marker, reminding the audience of the uniqueness of Australia. In similar ways, throughout the Olympics, when various nations were represented or discussed, they were accompanied by music that signified their country. In this way, music allowed for an immediate connection between the country being observed and its heritage.

Folkestad stated that national identities are similar to other musical identities in the complex way they are constructed. “Individuals forming their musical identities are influenced by and a product of several collective musical identities, and these exist in parallel and on several levels—including the local, the regional, the national and the global” (p. 151). Accordingly, a national identity is often seen an overarching identity,

one is that unifying to a large number of people. Furthermore, a national music identity is influential in the way it can unite a population from vastly diverse cultural and ethnic communities. Folkestad contends that music educators play a meaningful role in building and promoting a national identity. Often, the music classroom is the primary source for exposing young people to the traditions and etiquette that accompany a national identity.

Music and Gender Identity

Numerous researchers have also investigated music educators' role in forming gendered identities in music. Within the context of a school music classroom, Green (1997) examined gender roles through students' musical participation, beliefs, and preferences. Over a six-month period, students and teachers were observed and interviewed at a suburban school outside of London. Green observed meaningful differences in the ways teachers and students described their musical experiences. For example, teachers portrayed girls as more musically expressive and eloquent than boys. Furthermore, teachers described the girls as better singers and more enjoyable to teach in the classroom. Similarly, the girls stated that they were more active in the classroom and demonstrated more sophisticated musical skills than the boys. However, with regard to composition girls described their abilities and interests as inferior to the boys. Similarly, while the boys described their singing as substandard to girls, they bragged about their abilities as composers. Green asserts that for girls, taking risks and playing out of turn in the classroom during composition exercises was not considered fun or

appropriate. Meanwhile, the boys described composition activities as exciting and rewarding. In summarizing the ways girls were defined as better performers and boys as composers, Green states, “girls and boys experience their own music as a reflection and legitimization of their own gender identities” (p. 151). For Green, gender roles were evident in the classroom as passive musical activities were favored by girls, while more individual, risk-taking activities were preferred by the boys.

According to O’Neill (1997), “the term ‘gender roles’ is used to describe the behaviors that are considered appropriate for males and females in a particular culture” (p. 47). One of the most frequent topics of research pertaining to gender roles concerns musical instrument preference. As early as the 1970s, researchers were investigating why males or females preferred certain musical instruments. For example, Abeles and Porter (1978) asked adults to pick a musical instrument they believed most appropriate for their (hypothetical) son or daughter. The researchers found that participants asked to pick an instrument for a daughter were most likely to select a clarinet, flute, or violin. Conversely, participants selecting an instrument for a son were most likely to pick the trombone, drums, or trumpet. Abeles and Porter determined that adults consistently convey gender stereotypes concerning instruments and gender roles. They concluded that children’s perceptions of gender roles and music are unclear; however, parents may play a meaningful role in shaping children’s perceptions of musical instruments during the selection process (e.g., flutes are for girls).

Whereas Abeles and Porter (1978) focused on role of adults’ perceptions of musical instruments, Delzell and Leppla (1992) addressed children’s views of gender

and music. In their study, Delzell and Leppla asked children (ages 9-10) to view pictures of musical instruments to determine which instrument they would most prefer to play. Girls consistently preferred the flute or violin while boys favored the trumpet and drums. However, girls were more willing to choose from a wider selection of instruments, such as the piano or guitar. In a similar study, O'Neill and Boulton (1996) also found that children strongly identified the trumpet and drums as masculine while the flute and violin were deemed feminine. The authors suggest that boys have stronger opinions concerning instrument selection because of their need to avoid being labeled as feminine. During adolescence, a boy's struggle to build a masculine self-image will often require him to only participate in activities that signify masculinity. Therefore, boys are very unwilling to play instruments most associated with female traits, such as flute or violin. Additionally, like Abeles and Porter (1978), O'Neill (2002) determined that early assigned gender stereotypes attached to musical instruments are held throughout a person's lifetime. Issues of music and gender identity are being increasingly examined by researchers and constitute a large portion of emerging *music in identity* research (Macdonald, Hargreaves, & Miell, 2002).

Youth Identity

Tarrant, North, and Hargreaves (2002) stated that there was a growing body of evidence that demonstrated the importance of music in young people's lives. There is also increasing consensus among researchers that individuals perceive their musical identities as bifurcated between their formal experiences (in school) and their informal

(out of school). This duality increases as students enter adolescence and engage in musical activities they can organize themselves.

The authors suggested that the influences that shape adolescents' social development also meaningfully influence their musical identity development. As adolescents attempt to define themselves and their place in society, they often pass through phases of accepting and rejecting the values that surround them. Music is often the vehicle that enables adolescents to categorize and renegotiate the ways they view themselves in relation to society.

The role of the media is apparent and well documented in adolescent social development (2002). As a result, the media plays an influential function in defining the ways young people engage and identify with music. The authors suggested that music is one of the markers that allowed adolescents to feel a part of cultural subgroup they have seen on television. Adolescents are well aware of the stereotypes that accompany the music genre they see in the media. By choosing to identify with certain musical genres, they are able to publicly demonstrate their social affiliations. In sum, musical preferences and behaviors provide adolescents with ways of marking their own personal identity needs, but also their group identity needs.

Tarrant et al. stated that music allowed youths to separate themselves from previous generations in noticeable ways. Therefore, music will consistently be utilized to symbolize the values and ideals of each subsequent generation. They call for future research employing social identity theory (SIT) to examine the connections between musical affiliations and various age groups.

Forms of Musical Identity

Although some researchers discuss musical identity as a large, all-encompassing construct, others have begun discussing specific types of musical identity such as performer, composer, listener, teacher, and other roles. For example, O'Neill (2002) examined the social dynamics involved in young people's construction of a performance identity. In her study, O'Neill analyzed the discourses of four adolescent female musicians as they discussed their musical experiences. All of the participants were proficient musicians who scored the highest mark possible on their music examinations. By examining the way young people describe the role of music in their lives, O'Neill found that young performers utilized music to construct a 'sense of self' in vastly different ways. O'Neill expected to find similarities in the girls' descriptions of their performance identities because they shared similar backgrounds and levels of performance achievement. However, much to O'Neill's surprise, the only thing the girls had in common was the ability to demonstrate musical proficiency. Each of the participants described vastly different attitudes towards music—from considering it a passion to complete indifference. While one participant viewed music as a means of self-expression, another simply played the notes on the page out of a sense of responsibility to her teacher and parents. Due to the dissimilarity of the participants' descriptions, O'Neill cautioned researchers against equating students' proficient abilities as performers with meaningful emotional commitment.

O'Neill stated, "there is increasing evidence to suggest that a gulf in meaning exists between ourselves as researchers, and the young people we study when

considering what it is to be a musician" (p. 93). She called for social constructivist approaches that encourage new ways of understanding the self-identity of performing musicians. In conclusion, O'Neill suggests, "younger musicians' constructions of who they are and therefore what is possible or appropriate, and wrong or inappropriate forms of musical engagement are derived from the ideology of lived experience" (p. 94).

The notion of a specific performing identity has largely been addressed in the research of Davidson. Davidson (2002) considered the factors that lead to solo performers' self-identities, essentially asking: what makes a solo performer? In Davidson's study, issues of environmental circumstances, patterns of behavior, personality traits, and other factors that influence the experience of a solo performer were observed. Utilizing a reflexive approach, Davidson presented her own experiences as a solo performer and those of a friend 'Steve". She found considerable difference in both their attitudes toward performing as well as their reasons for wanting to perform. For Davidson, performing music is an opportunity to show off, it allowed her to publicly express feelings and proudly demonstrate abilities she has worked hard to perfect. Davidson's friend Steve is an adept guitarist; however, his attitude towards performing differs dramatically from her own. For Steve, music is highly personal. It is a vehicle for self-expression, and he takes no pleasure in publicly displaying his skills and abilities.

For Davidson, the vast differences in their attitudes toward being a solo performer provide an opportunity for exploring the concept of a self-identity. She cited environmental factors, casual but frequent exposure to music, and the role of key others

as primary factors leading to their differences. For example, Davidson grew up in a household that encouraged and nurtured her performing in front of others. Meanwhile, Steve's experience was quite different; he views the guitar as "a solitary, escapist activity" (p. 98). While Davidson attended a performance-based primary school that allowed for significant exposure to the arts, Steve was not provided such performance-rich opportunities. Furthermore, Davidson cited her father's competitive spirit as an inspiration when confronting competitive performance-based opportunities. For Davidson, her father was the principal individual who shaped her identity as a performer, even though he was not a musician or advocated for her participation in the arts.

Davidson listed differences in musical development in three categories: environment, exposure, and role of key others. Davidson also discussed topics of motivation and personality, and further observed the distinction between performers and perceived characteristics of good solo performers. When discussing a solo performer identity, Davidson stated:

> Whilst some aspects of the performer's identity, such as extroversion, may be less susceptible to training than others, many aspects are elastic and can be both learned and trained. It would seem therefore, that it is possible for some individuals who make music to develop a sense of themselves as being performers. (p. 91)

Davidson's work is important to this study because I utilized her categories for examining a specific type of musical identity. From my initial experiences questioning

undergraduate composers, I realized that the categories of environmental influence, exposure to music, and role of key others could help organize salient themes that frame a compositional identity.

Research in Composition and Music Education

> The growing interest in composition and music education is evidenced in the body of research that has sought to probe the nature of children's composition products and thinking as composers. (Barrett, 2006, p. 197)

As Barrett succinctly stated, an important, ever-expanding body of literature exists concerning composition and music education. I begin this section by presenting ways researchers currently examine this emergent research area. Next, I address literature that examines composers' viewpoints and experiences as children, adolescents, and adults. Specifically, I present research that codifies composers' skill and identity development.

The current body of research in composition and music education can be classified into four bodies of literature: (1) pedagogy, (2) notation, (3) technology, and (4) assessment. Pedagogy, the largest body of literature, can be further subdivided into four subcategories. Task structure, the first subcategory, includes research in which participants' compositional activities were monitored as various compositional tasks were presented (Baldi & Tafuri, 2001; Guilbault, 2004; Henry, 1996; Kaschub, 1999; Kennedy, 2002; Kratus, 2001; McCoy, 1999). Teacher perspective/procedure addresses how teachers' beliefs and discourses can intentionally, and often unintentionally, shape the compositional process of participants (Berkley, 2004; Dogani, 2004; Fautley, 2004;

Hogg, 1994; Koutsoupidou, 2005). Group instruction addresses the social dynamics and decision-making processes that occur when composition tasks are completed by groups rather than individuals (Burnard, 2002; Fautley, 2005; Fodor, 1998; Seddon, 2005; Strand, 2003; Wiggins, 1999). Finally, student perspective addresses students' descriptions and viewpoints during compositional activities (Barrett 1996, 1998, 2001a; Burnard, 1999; Davies, 1992; Freed-Garrod, 1999; Kennedy, 2002; Stauffer, 2001).

Other prominent research topics include: the use of computer-aided composition instruction (Carlin, 1997; Challis & Savage, 2001; Daignault, 1996; Fern, 1995; Folkestad, 1996, 1998; Folkestad, Hargreaves, & Lindstrom, 1998; Folkestad & Nilson, 2005; Fung, 1997; Hickey, 1997; Kwami & Pitts, 2002; Prasso, 1997; Savage, 2005; Seddon, 2005). The topic of notation and the ways children utilize formal and informal approaches to written composition has been observed (Barrett, 1997, 1999, 2001b, 2002; Christenson, 1992; Myung-Suk & Walker, 1999). Finally, researchers have addressed ways assessment can shape the student's compositional practice and a teacher's composition instruction (Fautley, 2005; Freed-Garrod, 1999; Garcia, 1998; Hickey & Webster, 1995; Swanwick & Franca, 1999).

While topics of pedagogy, notation, technology, and assessment have been investigated within the framework of music education research, less attention has been placed on composers as individuals (Barrett, 2006; Stauffer, 2003; Tsisserev; 1998). Although limited, there exists a growing interest in research pertaining to composers as persons. This section of the review will examine research on children as composers, adolescents as composers, and adults' first remembrances of creative activities.

Children as Composers

Stauffer (2003) investigated the concepts of compositional identity and compositional voice in young composers. In the introduction, Stauffer stated that eminent composers have a distinctive identity and voice that was discernable to careful listeners. In this study, she questioned if children and adolescents are capable of demonstrating similar concepts at an early age. By investigating the notion of composer identity and voice in younger students, Stauffer sought an enhanced understanding of early compositional experience and viewpoints.

In defining how the terms *identity, voice,* and *compositional identity* are utilized in the study, Stauffer wrote:

> I used *identity* to mean the unique qualities of a composer's works. I propose that 'identity' (characteristic gesture and structure) and 'voice' (expression and meaning) are indeed linked to social systems, even among young composers, and, further, that 'compositional identity' is linked to seeing oneself as a composer. (p. 92)

In other words, Stauffer used the term 'identity' to refer to elements composers employed to construct music. The term 'voice' concerned more abstract notions of individual's desire to communicate emotive ideas while 'compositional identity' addressed their personal viewpoints as composers.

Through a historical and theoretical lens, numerous academicians have deconstructed the works of eminent composers (Barrett, 2006). According to Stauffer (2006), there is an extensive tradition of theorists and ethnomusicologists studying the

identity and voice of gifted composers. However, to date, scholarship in the academy related to composers has been limited to the lives of eminent composers and masterworks. Subsequently, little is known about the compositional voice or identity of creative children and adolescents.

Stauffer suggested that while music educators have addressed issues surrounding children and creativity, their focus has been on children's perception of music and teaching practices that enable learning. Concerning previous research in music education, Stauffer stated:

> From the extensive and valuable body of literature we know a great deal about students' attitudes, aptitudes, preferences, skills, and knowledge. More specifically, we have studied children in the act of creating music to discover how age, experience, prior musical training, stages of development, aptitude, and other characteristics affect composing. (p. 93)

Although the body of research concerning children and creativity is growing, Stauffer cites a lack of research concerning the meaning behind children's compositional practice. "We have rarely, however, examined children as composers with intentions, meanings, gestures, and structures that are separate, and distinct from adult expectations" (p. 94).

To investigate the possibility that children and adolescents were capable of a distinct compositional identity and voice, Stauffer reviewed data from a previously completed longitudinal study. The previous study was conducted from 1994 to 2001 and included 40 participants, 5 to 11 years old. Some of the participants took part in the

study for seven years while others were only involved for a few weeks. All of the participants composed using a composition software program without a synthesizer or piano-type keyboard. During the study participants were not given any composition instruction. Stauffer preferred a non-interventionist strategy to allow students complete freedom. Adults were always present during the study; however their only responsibility included technical instruction relating to computer software or hardware. Lastly, the compositions Stauffer scrutinized for the study were limited to musical works the students specifically identified as compositions.

Stauffer focused on the compositions of four students—Hillary, Lee, Luke, and Meg. Each of the four students were interviewed on numerous occasions and questioned about their compositional practices. After examining the participants' descriptions and compositions, Stauffer determined that students' work was directly related to their current life experiences. For example, Hillary, a sixth-grade trombone player, consistently composed pieces that included one treble part and one bass part. Hillary was frustrated that much of the music she played in band contained overly simplistic parts for the trombone section. Composing gave Hillary the opportunity to write music that provided bass clef readers more rhythmic and melodic complexity. For Hillary, composing provided the opportunity to explore her musical knowledge while challenging herself as a trombonist.

Similarly to Hillary, each of the composers wrote music that was directly related to current experiences with music making. In this way, the four composers' previous experience with music, even if limited, meaningfully shaped their music.

Furthermore, Stauffer concluded that all of the composers reflected on influences of family and school as a supportive network or web, when considering their creative output. After carefully examining the works of the four composers Stauffer writes:

> I am increasingly convinced that young composers do indeed have a voice and identity, that voice and identity emerge early in their works, that their works are based in their own webs and reflect their individual lives and states of being, and that their works are significant and signifying to them. (p. 106)

Although Stauffer provided a thorough case for supporting compositional identity and voice in young children, she cautioned the reader and provided several caveats. She counseled researchers to be thoughtful about assuming meaning in students' work. To appreciate the work of the young composers, a meaningful relationship must first be developed between the participant and the researcher. Stauffer warns that it is easy to fall into the trap of "wrong inferences, misguided conclusions, and inappropriate assumptions" (p. 106). She concluded by encouraging educators to provide compositional opportunities in their music programs in both group and individual activities.

Finnegan (1989) also examined the compositions of young children to investigate their musical practices. Finnegan interviewed numerous young students at Milton Keynes School, a suburban school just outside of London. Participants were observed composing and improvising music in a classroom where the teacher utilized a non-interventionist approach. Finnegan was primarily interested in the ways the

students' immediate social community of family, school, and church influenced the students' compositional voice.

Many of the participants described the role of family in instigating their musical interest. "An even more common reaction was to remark how parents or other relatives had provided the initial stimulus and how this had then grown into an established interest" (p. 308). However, there were discrepancies in the way the students viewed the role of their parents in shaping their compositional voice. Students who considered themselves more "pop" oriented were less likely to view their parents as supportive. However, students engaged in more traditional music readily admitted the significant influence of their parents' approval. Finnegan suggested that while the students who composed music that was more 'pop' oriented believed they were more independent, in reality, they were not. Finnegan posits that the parents of the adolescents were most likely equally supportive, however adolescents are often unmindful of parental influence.

In summary, when describing the elements that shape children's expressive voice, Finnegan stated:

> Those children perceiving their choices as unfettered and personal certainly have one part of the truth.…But to this awareness of free choice must also be added the patterns of constraints and opportunities that—sometimes partly outside the actors' own awareness—help to draw individuals toward or away from particular paths, or shape the way they tread them, chief among these the influence of gender, of age, of stage of life-cycle, the link to various of social

> groups and—the point that recurs again and again—family musical background. (p. 317)

When teaching composition, Finnegan asks instructors to allow children to discuss social influences that shape their work. She concluded that students who discuss their musical decision-making processes within the context of their social environment are more likely to recognize and understand their evolving compositional development.

Compositional Voice of High School Composers

Tsisserev (1998) also explored the relationship between social influences that surround young composers and their creative products. Tsisserev questioned 16 secondary students to examine the ways they express themselves through composition. He stated that numerous studies have focused on compositional methodologies but few address students' musical decision-making:

> I am not familiar with any typologies that focus on the creative process rather than the product. I am interested in the mental images, thoughts and emotions that confront a student during the process of composition. I am also interested in the composer's management of these images, thoughts and emotions throughout his/her quest for self-expression within the context of the creative process. (p. 168)

To examine the ways the participants expressed themselves, Tsisserev compared the creation of musical works to other creative language arts projects. In this way, Tsisserev was able to obtain a broader view of students' objectives concerning expression and

creativity. Tsisserev provided 16 high school participants with composition lessons over a six-month time frame. At the end of the composition program, four of the participants were interviewed and their musical and literary work carefully examined.

One of the participants in Tsisserev's work, interviewee #2, was extensively described because her experiences communicating emotional ideas through both music and poetry were most representative of all of the composers. Throughout the composition program, interviewee #2 insisted on mimicking popular music in her work. At first Tsisserev was hesitant in allowing her to incorporate popular sounds into the compositions; he was concerned that she would focus on imitation rather than expressing her own unique voice. However, after extensive interviews and studying her musical and poetic works, he determined that popular music offered an effective motivational and expressive starting point for musical composition. In explaining the way interviewee #2 demonstrated her musical knowledge, Tsisserev wrote:

> She had to apply her knowledge of elements such as dynamics, form and texture in order to shape the sound with which she was working. All of this application of conceptual knowledge had to be directed towards reaching a particular objective (in the case of this composer, the objective was to create a piece of music which, like Enigma's work, would elicit images and feelings of fast highway driving). The attempt to reach this objective, however, would take place within a genre of music, which was chosen by, and was directly related to the composer at the time of composition. (p. 278)

After interviewing the four participants, Tsisserev concluded that high school composers were able to effectively express themselves in both music and language arts. Moreover, both their creative work and expressive voice were influenced by their immediate cultural surroundings. Tsisserev described:

> Students, when given the chance, do leave their "I am" mark. This mark is filled with imagery, thought and emotion which the composers attempt to express through their work. Students did not talk about making music—they made it, and then went a step further by sharing it, and for a moment in time, living it. It would be difficult to locate a more effective way for a person to identify him/herself and him/herself within his/her culture, and bond him/herself with that culture, then to engage in self-expression by using one of the more powerful vehicles that a culture has to offer—its art, more specifically, music. (p. 275)

In sum, Tsisserev stated that students responded positively to the opportunity to compose music. Furthermore, with little composition instruction participants were able to express themselves in individual and nuanced ways. Also, by comparing participants' poetry with their musical compositions, Tsisserev determined that high school students were capable of communicating similar emotive ideas in both literary and musical forms. Finally, Tsisserev found that students were able to express their own feelings through music but were limited by pressures to gain approval from their immediate community of peers.

Adult Musicians' Remembrances of Creativity

Woodward (2006) also noted a strong relationship between young musicians' early creative musical identity and their immediate community of parents, peers, and teachers. Woodward interviewed undergraduate students enrolled at a large university in the south to examine the ways they first described their initial creative musical experiences. To examine these remembrances, Woodward utilized a multidisciplinary review of literature and metanarratives of the participants in his study. The twenty participants included 15 music majors and 5 non-music majors. Woodward also noted the specific areas represented within the music major as: a) music education; b) music business; c) music composition, and d) Bachelor of Arts in music.

Woodward stated that all of the participants, regardless of undergraduate major, described experiences of active engagement in creative musical behaviors. First remembrances of musical creativity were determined by the student's descriptions of activities such as improvisation or composition. Additionally, the participants all described a willingness to create music during childhood even though it was considered unpopular by their peers. Woodward states:

> During adolescence, some of the interviewees successfully engaged in creative musical activity independently or in a comfortable setting. Upon reaching adulthood, students who had successfully participated in creative musical activities at the adolescent level continued to do so, but a desire to create appeared to override the absence of past creative experiences. Thus, music

> creativity appeared to be accessible even for adult students with minimal formal music training, particularly in the form of creative thinking. (p. xi)

Woodward found that the participants who seemed the most engaged in creative activities shared a passion for exploring sound through play. Many of the participants were unable to describe their desire to be musically creative or the origin of their motivation. Additionally, he found that students in the study who believed in their own abilities to create during their adolescence or early college years were engaged in more creative activities. Woodward cautions against simply concluding that students who believe in their abilities at an early age are more creative. “It would be unrealistic to suggest that some students simply persist in creating music because they believe in themselves. All students are affected by environmental factors to some degree, and student perceptions of social contexts appear to become more important as they mature” (p. 161).

Woodward determined that some of the participants who became more confident in their creative abilities when they grew older had received feedback from valued peers and mentors. In this way, their immediate social community reinforced and influenced participants’ compositional identity. Peers, teachers, and parents were not all motivational; yet some provided meaningful feedback that shaped the way participants composed and improvised music throughout their adolescence.

In conclusion, Woodward suggests that a social-psychological approach could help identify the ways in which environmental and societal influences shaped the

creative experiences of the participants. He calls for more research that examines the ways in which sociological factors influence creative development.

Composers and the Academy

I begin this section by defining the term academy within the context of this study. Next, I present information provided by the National Association of Schools of Music concerning undergraduate composition majors within the United States. Subsequently, I discuss research concerning the teaching of composition in college and university programs. Lastly, I present what composition teachers portray as challenges to undergraduate composers.

Undergraduate education takes place in an academic context that conveys and upholds certain values and images of what it means to compose and what music is worth composing. In this study, I utilize the term academy to refer to the undergraduate environment surrounding the participants. In this way, I refer to the cultures, traditions, and opinions that frame the milieu of the undergraduate composition major. Miller (1993) cites that two major principles significantly shape the experience of musicians in the academy:

> First is the belief that in order to become a serious musician one must engage in formal study in school, usually in a college music program or a conservatory, which gives broad-based foundations in theory, history, pedagogy, and performance. The second notion is that any hybrid academic combination involving music (music therapy, music business, music theater, etc.) is primarily

> a musical endeavor, and those who pursue this sequence should be trained so that they display a high level of competence in music. (p. 50)

While Miller focuses on the performance-based nature of the musical experience in college settings, Nettl (1995) examines the connotation of music. He states:

> The "music" in schools of music always means, exclusively or overwhelmingly, Western classical music (also called "art music," "canonic music," "canonic music," "cultivated music," "serious music," and even—wryly—"real music" and "normal music"). (p. 3)

Nettl emphasized that music studied, performed, and analyzed in the academy is considered separate from everyday, common, or popular musical experiences. Furthermore, although some changes have been made to the canon of literature that is considered appropriate for study, there is still a tremendous emphasis on the music of a few, eminent composers (1995).

For contemporary performers and composers, the academy provides refuge from dynamic social and musical changes (Miller, 1993). Throughout the history of music, conservatories and schools of music have provided intellectual and financial support. As Miller asserts, the institutionalization of music within the academy has been both a blessing and a curse. While it has provided composers and performers the opportunity to hone their skills and maintain virtuosic musical traditions, it has also sheltered them from musical trends and developments surrounding everyday music consumers. The institutionalization of musical practice within the academy influences the education and

training of all undergraduate musicians, including performers, theorists, musicologists, and composers.

Composers' Enrollment in NASM Institutions

Although a degree in music composition is not required of professional composers, a vast majority of current composers receive formal training in music composition from a school of music or conservatory (Rochberg, 1984). The National Association of Schools of Music reports that 152 institutions offer Bachelor of Music degrees in composition, 109 institutions offer master's degrees, while 44 offer doctoral degrees (NASM, 2002-2006). Additionally, each year, approximately 205 undergraduate composition majors awarded degrees from NASM accredited institutions. As a means of comparison, 3809 music education degrees were awarded annually to undergraduate music education majors during the same period. It is also interesting to note that the gap of enrollment between composition and education enrollment closes substantially at the doctoral level. Over the past 5 years an average of 65 doctoral degrees were awarded to composers each year, while 86 doctoral degrees are awarded to music educators.

NASM does not collect data on the number of undergraduate composers who double major in other musical disciplines such as performance, or other degree programs outside the field of music. Furthermore, statistics on the attrition rate of composition majors, or the number of students who begin a undergraduate major in composition but do not finish, are not gathered. Lastly, there is no information on the

career paths or livelihoods of undergraduate composition majors upon completing their undergraduate degree. In summary, very little is known about undergraduate composers and their experiences after graduation.

Undergraduate Compositional Study

Not only is there limited information on composers' experiences upon finishing an undergraduate degree program, little is known about the instruction of composition *during* the program. This is because, in large measure, composition is taught on a one-to-one basis (Barrett, 2006). Although master classes, class instruction, or workshops often supplement composition instruction, the core of a composer's education stems from apprenticing with an eminent composer. The small size of composition programs within the academy, compounded with the individualized nature of composition instruction, creates a lack of transparency in the process of composition instruction.

A few books illuminate issues and concerns surrounding the compositional practices of eminent composers. However, the texts are often philosophical in nature, providing theoretical and abstract approaches to compositional practices at the college level (Adolphe, 1999; Ford, 1992; McCutchan, 1999; Piirto, 1992). In contrast, other textbooks written by eminent composers provide highly technical, prescriptive approaches to composition study (Hindemith, 1942; Persichetti, 1961; Piston; 1987). Besides these few sources, very little is known about the teaching practices of composer-teachers and the ways composition is taught at the college level (Barrett, 2006).

In recent years, researchers have begun questioning eminent composers, focusing on issues of compositional pedagogy (Barrett & Ford, 2000; Barrett & Gromko, 2001). For example, Lapidaki (2007) interviewed eminent composers to view the ways they describe and analyze the composition process. Lapidaki had two goals in pursuing this study. The first was to obtain a better philosophical understanding of contemporary composers. She stated:

> With so many researchers of music education looking at the compositional processes of students in classrooms and music technology laboratories, it would be very helpful to acknowledge and draw philosophical implications for music composition in schools from recognized composers' voices and their individual composing realities. (p. 96)

The second goal of the study was to explore how a more philosophical understanding of composers could inform the practice of composition instruction at all ages.

She states, "a music teacher needs to indeed grasp how this creative process works in a real world context in order to foster and expand the student composer's craft of composition in educational settings at all levels" (p. 94). In order to observe composition in a 'real world context,' Lapidaki interviewed or examined the writings of numerous professional, world-renowned composers including Luciano Berio, Pierre Boulez, Robert Erikson, Brian Ferneyhough, Lucas Foss, Gyorgy Ligeti, Tristan Murail, Steve Reich, Roger Reynolds, Arnold Schoenberg, Karl Stockhausen, Edgar Varese, and Iannis Xenakis.

After examining the lifestyles and compositional practices of the composers, Lapidaki cited four prevalent themes: 1) the composer, the conscious, and the unconscious; 2) the beginning of the compositional process; 3) moving the compositional process forward; and 4) the composer between tradition and innovation. Each of the themes was described in detail and salient examples were given from the eminent composers.

Concerning the theme of the composer and the conscious mind, Lapidaki stated that "music creativity pertains to: a) the intangibility of the unconscious throughout the compositional practice, b) the development of music individuality, and c) the desire to transgress existing rules and codes" (p. 106). Although she was unsure of how this theme can directly shape a music educator's curricular choices, Lapidaki suggested that simply recognizing the complexities surrounding composers is important. Regarding the development of musical individuality, she suggests that teachers should persuade students to draw upon the exceptionality of their own life experiences and personalities to express themselves musically. Lastly, Lapidaki stated that composer-teachers should strongly encourage students to write in styles and ways that differ from their own compositional practices. In this way, students are pressed to find their own voice and seek out new and original ways of expressing themselves. Lapidaki acknowledged that composer-teachers have not always been so open to change and experimentation. In the past 30 years, composers in the academy have made dramatic philosophical changes in the way they view compositional process and products.

Barrett (2006) provided one of the most recent and thorough research articles exploring compositional practice in the academy. Building on preliminary work, she investigated the ways composition instruction is taught, learned, and perceived within composition communities in college level music programs. The participants in her study included an eminent composer-teacher, a composition student currently enrolled as an undergraduate major, and a composition major who had recently graduated, but also studied with the same eminent composer. She wrote:

> I suggest that the teaching and learning relationship between an eminent composer-teacher and advanced student-composer may be viewed as both a cooperative and collaborative learning enterprise where a 'network of cooperating people' works toward a final outcome. This is evidenced not only in those interactions that take place between the composer-teacher and the student-composer in composition tutorials, but also in the ways in which the composer-teacher and student-composer engage with the social and cultural tools and beliefs and practices of music composition. (p. 198)

Barrett interviewed the three participants on numerous occasions and videotaped the composition lessons of the undergraduate composer for an entire semester. A case study design was employed to examine the discourse and actions of the participants, with specific attention given to the teaching strategies of the composer-teacher. The following teaching strategies were observed during the lessons by the composer-teacher:

1. extended thinking, provided possibilities;

2. referenced work to and beyond the tradition;
3. set parameters for identity as a composer;
4. provoked the student to describe and explain;
5. purpose, probed intention;
6. shifted back and forth between micro and macro levels;
7. provided multiple alternatives for analysis of student work;
8. prompted the students to engage in self-analysis;
9. encouraged goal setting and task identification;
10. engaged in joint problem finding and problem solving;
11. provided reassurance;
12. gave license to change (p. 199).

For each of the teaching strategies listed above, Barrett provided detailed examples of the dialogues between the composer-teacher and student. Of the 12 teaching strategies, two were especially pertinent to this study—referenced work to and beyond the tradition, and parameters for identity as a composer.

During the composition lessons, the composer-teacher often related the student composer's music to other eminent composers. Barrett labels this constant comparison *signposting*. Frequently, the composer-student was required to listen to specific recordings or explore specific techniques in order to better understand how her work could be related to others. Often the composer-teacher made specific references to the composer-student's work with regards to specific traditions or schools of writing. In the

example Barrett provides, the composer-student's work was being compared to the writing style of the Second Viennese School.

The composer-teacher often set parameters for establishing an identity as a composer. This was often accomplished by asking the student to reflect on ways her writing differed from other traditions or school of writing. "The focusing on issues of identity occurred throughout the tutorials as the composer-teacher encouraged the composer-student to consider what was unique about her work as a composer linked to the notion of an emergent voice" (p. 203). Furthermore, Barrett suggested that a compositional identity emerged when the teacher and student discussed difficulties being a composer. For example, when advice was shared on the difficulties of networking and working with musicians in an orchestral setting, the composer-teacher provided counsel on how to *be* a successful composer.

In addition to the teaching strategies, Barrett also noted three prevalent themes that emerged from her experiences with the three composers—composer model, enterprise, and composer voice. The theme of composer model referred to the ways the student-composers described their teacher's influence. For the student composers, their teacher demonstrated how they should work as composers, including habits and processes of writing. Additionally, students were both inspired by the way the composer-teacher talked about music and the vocabulary he used to describe and analyze musical elements.

Concerning the theme of enterprise, Barrett stated: "to be enterprising includes showing initiative and imagination, and taking risks in new endeavors" (p. 211). The

student composers frequently remarked on their teacher's assertive and dynamic attitude. For example, the composer-teacher persuaded the students to network with performers to attain better performances of their work. Additionally, he inspired them to aggressively seek out ways to get their music heard and performed.

The theme of composer voice emerged when Barrett noticed that the student composers all credited their teacher for helping find their own individualized style. When discussing the philosophy of his teacher, one of the student-composers remarked, "his style was not to be the grand composer-teacher and saying that the only way you can learn is by studying my works, you know the composer-teacher was allowing me to experience my own identity and my voice" (p. 211). The composer-teacher overtly expressed his opinion that composition students should not be forced to write in one particular style. Furthermore, he insisted that young composers must be provided with the opportunity to explore multiple types of writing styles to find a voice they feel is their own.

Barrett concluded that eminence studies have the potential to inform the teaching and learning practices of music at all levels. She states:

> Whilst the teaching of composition in school settings has few parallels structurally with the one-on-one tutoring employed in this study, the teaching strategies observed may be modified and adapted to accommodate these settings. (p. 214)

Similar to Barrett, it is also my intent that by studying the practices of composers within the academy a greater understanding of compositional development and practice can

emerge. Furthermore, just as Barrett suggests, the hope is that themes that emerge from this line of study can inform creative and compositional practice at all levels.

Summary of Literature

This study examined the experiences of undergraduate composers by investigating the concept of an undergraduate compositional identity. To address this concept, I focused on three areas of research. First, I addressed the larger concept of music identity research within the framework of social psychology. Next, I presented research on composition and music education with emphasis on individuals as composers. Lastly, I discussed the current culture of the composer and the academy

Music researchers are rapidly broadening the body of research concerning identity and music. This surge of research inspired Macdonald, Hargreaves, and Miell (2002) to cite a new term to help codify and organize the emerging topics—musical identities. Musical identity formation has been addressed from numerous perspectives. Research was presented regarding parents' musical knowledge, and the importance of substantial participation in their children's musical activities. Additionally, the role of peer influence, media, and school settings were noted in formative stages of adolescent musical development. Finally, I presented research concerning the consequence of meaningful exposure to music in the formative development of creative musicians. As Macdonald, Hargeaves, and Miell (2002) assert, environmental factors and meaningful musical exposure can shape musical identity formation in diverse and multifaceted ways. Furthermore, environmental factors that shape an individual's musical viewpoints

are not isolated; acting together these experiences shape and reshape musical identities throughout a person's lifetime.

Although the majority of music education research concerning creativity has been limited to process and products, there is a growing body of research investigating composers as individuals (Barrett, 2006). Research was presented that emphasized the personal experiences of children (Stauffer, 2002), adolescents (Tsisserev, 1998), and adults (Woodward, 2006), within the composition experience. Although much is known about the lives of eminent composers, very little is known about neophyte, or pre-professional composers. The work presented in this section emphasized the ways composition can influence peoples' lives, both musically and non-musically.

Because of the apprenticeship-like nature of composition study in the academy, composition instruction can vary greatly. While NASM accounts for the number of composition students enrolled at various levels of study, little is known about the lives of composition majors upon graduating or their experiences while enrolled. Currently, there is a limited body of research concerning the social dimensions of compositional identity, although in general, music researchers are increasingly employing sociological lenses to address music issues and questions. Subsequently, in this study I examined musical and non-musical elements that influence an undergraduate composition major. By questioning the various components of undergraduate composers' experiences, I sought to investigate 'what comprises an undergraduate compositional identity?'

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents the research design and methodological processes used in the construction of this study. After a brief overview of research, I describe the two-pronged methodology employed in this study including the use of narrative and case study research designs. Next, I describe the pilot study and how it informed the current study. I address gaining access to the participants, purposeful sampling, and development of the interview protocol. Subsequently, I explain the data analysis, including the use of storyboarding techniques to code and analyze the interview transcripts. Finally, I attend to issues of verification, including establishing rapport and trustworthiness, and the use of an external audit.

Research Overview

This study was designed to clarify essential questions that surround the experiences of young composers and to explore the concept of an undergraduate compositional identity. Because few studies have examined the undergraduate composer, this study is guided by a simple, yet fundamental question—what comprises an undergraduate compositional identity? The goal of the study is to offer a rich illustration of undergraduate composers' experiences to better understand their development, beliefs, and perspectives. To provide a thorough depiction of the composers' experiences I utilized both case study design and a narrative approach.

Case Study Research

Creswell (2005) defines case study as “an in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection” (p. 439). The bounded system can include a single setting, a single subject, an event, or a specific collection of documents. Furthermore, Creswell states that a bounded system is “separated out for research in terms of time, place, or some physical boundaries” (p. 438). These various dimensions create what Stake (2005) defines as an *integrated system.*

In case study research the primary intent is not to study a large population; instead, the intent is to recognize a particular case “in its idiosyncrasy, in its complexity” (Stake, 1995, p. 256). According to Hancock and Algozzine (2006), “in contrast with experimental research, case study research is generally more exploratory than confirmatory; that is, the case study researcher normally seeks to identify themes or categories of behavior and events rather than prove relationships or test hypotheses” (p. 16). The term ‘case study’ is complicated by the various ways it is used to refer to a variety of forms of qualitative research. Stake (2005) categorizes case studies into three forms: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. An intrinsic case study is performed for the sole purpose of deepening an understanding of a particular case. “It is not undertaken because the case represents a particular trait or problem, but instead because, in all of its particularity and ordinariness, the case is of interest” (p. 445). Instrumental case studies are used to gain insight into a particular case in order to illuminate an issue or redraw a generalization. In instrumental case studies, the issue being studied is paramount, while the case is a vehicle for gaining knowledge and is

secondary in significance. Multiple case study (sometimes referred to as collective case study) is used when the phenomenon, populations, and general conditions are examined by observing more than one case (Stake, 2005). Collective case studies "are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding and perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases" (p. 446). Furthermore, Stake clarifies that collective case studies allow a researcher to observe trends that emerge from data.

Case Study Research in the Context of This Study

Selecting the most appropriate case study approach is critical to qualitative research (Yin, 1989). Each type of case study provides a distinctive lens for viewing phenomena, themes, or issues. The flexibility inherent in case study research provides an excellent framework for exploring the identity of undergraduate composers. Yin (1989) states that case study "is a preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (p. 1). Because this study examines the distinctive construction of undergraduate students' compositional identity, it is well suited to the instrumental case study design as described by Stake (2005). Furthermore, by interviewing multiple composers to observe the development of one composer's compositional identity as compared to others, I employed what Stake describes as a collective case study.

Although multiple participants were interviewed in this study to provide a richer, fuller view of undergraduate composers' experience, it was not my intent to select a research population that was representative of all composers. Following qualitative traditions, I recognize that each case is highly individualistic and particular and not suited for producing generalizations.

A Narrative Lens

The complexities of the undergraduate years, compounded by the intricate nature of the compositional experience, make framing the identity of an undergraduate composer complicated. To best illuminate the multifaceted development of the undergraduate composer I utilized a narrative lens to describe each composer's account of her distinctive life story.

Narrative research has emerged from a combination of sociological and psychological research trends (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) assert, "because of the rapid evolution of qualitative inquiry, research modalities like narrative inquiry materialize" (p. ix). Furthermore, they posit that narrative research builds upon traditions of social constructivism (Gergen, 1994), postmodernism (Foucault, 1972), and hermeneutic trends in qualitative practices (Ricoeur, 1986). Narrative research often blurs conventional boundaries between disciplines (Reissman, 1993) and emphasizes issues of truth, meaning, and power. Narratives provide an insightful frame for research due to their capacity to organize, understand, and give meaning to individuals' lived experiences (Bruner, 1991a, 1991b; Reissman, 1993).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state, “narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience” (p. 20). Furthermore, they affirm that narrative research designs are qualitative procedures in which researchers describe the lives of individuals, collect and tell stories about these individuals’ lives, and write narratives about their experiences (2000). In describing narrative as a mode or process of inquiry Clandinin and Connelly state: “it is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" (p. 20). Stake (1995) addresses how narrative approaches complement case studies as “narratives optimize the opportunity of the reader to gain an experiential understanding of the case” (p. 40).

Chase (2005) suggests there are numerous ways of employing narrative lenses within qualitative research. Furthermore, she states that narratives often work within the framework of larger qualitative studies to view and analyze individual experiences in nuanced ways. In describing the formats in which narratives are represented, Chase defines a narrative “as an oral or written description of an individual's life, a story about an aspect of one's life, or a topical story about a specific occurrence and the other individuals involved in that occurrence” (p. 363). In summary, narrative research seeks to illuminate the subjective and personal meaning making in qualitative research.

In this study, I used a narrative lens to describe the undergraduate composers’ experiences and illuminate the similarities and differences in their accounts. To help reveal meaning within this study I wrote composers’ narratives from their point of view, as if they were writing their own autobiographical account of their lives. This

approach is adapted from Rose's (1997) dissertation in which each case was presented in a narrative format from the perspective of the participant. This approach allowed me to create a more personal and intimate portrayal of the experience of each composer and ultimately further examine the identity of the undergraduate composers. In constructing these narrative accounts, I drew on direct quotes from the interview transcripts whenever possible, and restated ideas in my own words on other occasions. The narratives were also constructed to create a coherent presentation of the composer's life and experience. My use of narratives is intended to reflect, as authentically as possible, the nature of the undergraduate composers' experiences and therefore relate participants' stories in meaningful ways. In this way, I drew upon ideas from narrative inquiry to represent the developmental paths of the composers in narrative form. Narrative research not only helps to explicate the experience of a single case, it can also be beneficial to researchers' utilization of cross-case methodologies. LeCompte and Schensul (1999) explain that the use of narrative in studies with multiple cases focuses on the behaviors and beliefs that connect back to the group being studied.

Lastly, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) emphasized the need for a temporal framework when implementing a narrative design. They explain that narrative research provides a distinct opportunity to see experience as "temporal and to understand life as it is experienced in the here now but also…life as it is experienced on a continuum" (p. 19). Within a narrative, the reader should be aware of the account unfolding through time; this provides the reader with a sense of organization and cohesiveness. For example, Rose (1997) organized her narrative chronologically so material was

presented from earliest to most recent life experiences. Similarly, in this study I separated each autobiographical accounts into three sections: 1) past musical lives and influences; 2) current undergraduate experiences; and 3) the way the composers view themselves and their writing in the future.

Description of the Pilot Study

The purpose of the pilot study was to assess the feasibility of a main study that would examine the experiences of undergraduate composers. Undergraduate composition majors were chosen as participants because I believed they would provide valuable perspectives into the experience of becoming an art-music composer. In addition to determining feasibility, the pilot study provided an opportunity to structure interview protocols as well as practice organizing and analyzing data.

The central phenomenon of the pilot study centered on the way freshman composition majors describe their identities as composers—examining the ways their musical and personal experiences led them to designate composition as a major. To find participants for the study, I attended the weekly composition seminar at Northwestern University to introduce myself and ask for volunteers. Two undergraduate composition majors volunteered. Both were interviewed over a two-month period, completing five interviews that were recorded and transcribed. The main topics included: 1) awareness of students' past personal history, attitude, and perspectives towards their previous educational and musical experiences; 2) descriptions of undergraduate life and their

musical craft; 3) how past life experiences influenced their work; 4) compositional processes; and 5) portrayal of composition lessons.

The pilot data indicated that social influences played a major role in the undergraduate composers' musical development. Both composers were well aware of the advantages of growing up in settings that encouraged and fostered creative endeavors. Additionally, both composers were well aware of their parents' capacity to provide exceptional learning opportunities.

An emergent theme was the strong influence of formative musical experiences in developing a heightened enthusiasm for music. For both composers, performing at a young age was often mentioned when describing their early connection to music. Although both performers were playing in very competitive, high-quality ensembles at Northwestern, both considered their playing ability as pale in comparison to their peers who were performance majors. Next, each of the composers discussed the strong influence of personal relationships with parents, teachers, and peers in their musical development. The role of key others was a foremost topic for each composer. They both sought the approval of their parents and mentors as they made their decision to major in composition. It was evident that relationships with key others influenced both the way the composers viewed themselves as individuals, and more importantly, the way they valued themselves as musicians.

These data suggested a preliminary framework for understanding the experience of an undergraduate composer. Additionally, the findings of the pilot study implied that many of the influences undergraduate composers described were congruent with recent

research that examined how musicians identify and construct identities within specific musical roles. For example, Davidson (2002) found many similar trends in the way solo performers describe their formative experiences as they developed strong identities as performers. Some of the similarities include 1) early and frequent exposure to formal musical training; 2) supportive parents; 3) participation in high achieving ensembles; and 4) high academic achievement.

Learning From the Pilot Study

From completing the pilot study, I realized that undergraduate composers provide a valuable perspective when investigating the compositional experience. When working with the students during the pilot process I was able to establish a comfortable rapport with both students. Each of the composers was accommodating and seemed to enjoy the opportunity to speak about her experience as a composer. After the interviews, the participants described a heightened sense of self-reflection when considering their development as a composer.

Furthermore, by completing the pilot study I was able to revise several methodological procedures. First, I revised my interview questions and reevaluated their importance in my study. Specifically, I realized that more questions were needed to address how composers first started creating music rather than performing music. Second, a final interview was required for the specific purpose of reviewing what the composer had discussed and allowing time for clarification. Third, I realized the need to let participants take their time to answer questions and resist the urge to rush to the next

question. Fourth, I developed more probing questions in order to help the participant fully articulate ideas. Fifth, the pilot study revealed the need for artifact recall during the interview process. I discovered that the composers responded with richer detail when they were able to view and discuss their own work. Lastly, the process helped me become more comfortable with the interview process and with my abilities to help participants relax and feel comfortable talking with me. In review, the pilot study helped shaped the current study in numerous significant ways.

In conclusion, by completing the pilot study I recognized that the question of 'what makes an undergraduate composition major?' was largely unexplored within the field of music education. Additionally, I discovered that my research question was situated within a larger research narrative that explores the intersections between identity and music. Finally, the pilot study offered the opportunity to hone my skills as a researcher while modifying specific components of the methodology for the current study.

Framing the Research Questions

The primary research question that guided this study was: *What comprises an undergraduate compositional identity?* Based on the pilot study and the recent work of Davidson (2002), I recognized that undergraduate compositional identity was an amalgamation of formative life experiences, musical development, and compositional style. Three subsidiary questions provide structure for the examination of undergraduate compositional identity:

1. What do the students identify as features that lead to their identity as composers? As stated in Chapter 1, the categories of musical identity development provide appropriate scaffolding to the series of small topics I noted when interviewing the undergraduate composers (see Table 3.1.)

Table 3.1.

Overarching categories of music identity with emerging sub-themes.

Environmental Factors	Exposure to Music	Role of Key Others
Schools Attended Family Background Access to Lessons Access to Cultural Events	Participation in Ensembles Concerts Attended Influence of College Choice of Principal Instrument	Valued Others Sense of Self in Social Setting Socially Constructed Notions of Roles as a Composer

2. How do undergraduate composers describe their compositional voice or style? After interviewing undergraduate composers I observed an obvious desire and yearning to write in a distinctive style. Unlike a performance identity, a compositional identity is heavily influenced by the need to find one's style and create a characteristic voice. Furthermore, as cited in the literature review, for some composers their compositional voice is highly personal and expressive, while for others it is calculated and mechanical. This question highlights many procedural concerns composers may feel essential to their work.

3. What do the students identify as influences on their style?

This question elucidates how composers view their own writing and provides perspective into the role of outside influences on their own creative maturity. For some composers, their music is strongly influenced by the need to write for a specific ensemble or audience. For others, musical decisions are made on their own without influence (or so they claim), while others admittedly borrow styles and techniques they admire from other composers. This question highlights the way an undergraduate composer views herself within the larger context of the musical academy and the field of music as a whole.

Gaining Access and Visiting the Academy

In the following section I describe participant selection, my role as a researcher, and provide a brief introduction to the participants. Additionally, I will explain the procedures undertaken for data collection and data analysis. Following guidelines set forth by the Institutional Review Board at Northwestern University, I have used pseudonyms for all participants. Furthermore, private information such as locations of birth, current residence, and current teachers have either been removed from the data or slightly modified to protect the identity of the participants.

Before beginning the study, I surveyed universities and conservatories located along the East Coast to determine which schools maintained undergraduate composition programs. After reviewing the schools, I found that one university in particular had both a large population of undergraduate composers and an excellent, world-renowned composition faculty. In order to gain access to the composition students attending this

school I enlisted the help of a colleague who knew the composition faculty at the Northeastern University[3]. My colleague phoned the chair of the composition faculty, Dr. Green, and briefly explained that my dissertation concerned composers; I expressed my desire to interview the undergraduate students at Eastern Conservatory. He agreed, and during our phone conversation, he suggested I meet the composers at their weekly composition seminar held every Tuesday. Following his advice, I attended the composition seminar two weeks later. My visit to the academy is described in full because it serves as an introduction to the participants and the academic community that influences their socialization as composers.

Before the meeting began I introduced myself and thanked Dr. Green for the chance to speak to the students and ask for volunteers for the study. He introduced me to the other composition faculty members and briefly explained that I was completing a dissertation at Northwestern concerning composition.

The visit to the composition seminar was a wonderful catalyst for my study. As I observed the composition students entering the room I could sense the energy, passion, and excitement in their voices. Their enthusiasm about scores and their recordings reminded me of my own excitement at the beginning of my career. Curiously, no one seemed to notice or mind that someone they did not know was joining them, although later I discovered that guests visiting their seminar were a common occurrence. As the students took their seats they organized themselves in

[3] All names have been changed and certain information altered to protect the anonymity of the participants and the location of the study.

small groups of similar age. The doctoral students were easily identified; there were fewer of them and they appeared much older than the rest. They took their seats closer to the front, alongside the faculty. The undergraduates sat in the back of the room; they seemed much younger than everyone else in the room, and were by far the most lively and spirited group of students. The master's students were spread out throughout the middle of the class. They were noticeably more settled and quiet than the undergraduates and seemed to group in pairs. I noticed there were approximately 10 undergraduate students, 20 master's students, and 3 doctoral students. Nearly everyone in the room, with one exception, appeared to be Caucasian; one master's student was of Asian heritage. Furthermore, there were only two women in the room; I would later find out that one was an undergraduate and one was a master's degree student.

Dr. Green began the meeting by talking about upcoming composition competitions the department was sponsoring. He asked the students if any were interested in applying for the composition competition. Because there were separate categories for various degree levels, I was able to determine that my assumptions concerning the seating were correct. A solo performer from a neighboring university was visiting to perform a piano work recently composed by one of the faculty members, Dr. Fitzgerald. Dr. Green asked Dr. Fitzgerald if he would speak to the seminar and provide some background for the piano work before it was played. Hesitantly, and with great effort, the 30-something composer stood and faced the students. It was immediately clear to me that Dr. Fitzgerald was not pleased about the notion of talking about his work. While looking down at the floor he faintly muttered (paraphrased):

> It's a long work, nearly 90 minutes, and is nearly impossible to play. The performer spent almost 2 years and the bulk of two summers preparing the work. But that is what I heard, so that is what I write. I have always felt that if you write what you want, someone out there will play it and if it truly speaks from your heart it will speak to someone else's heart. I do apologize for the length of the work, I realize that it is tough to sit through, but we must. We must.

As Dr. Fitzgerald sat down, Dr. Green asked if that was all he had to say about the work. Dr. Green had nothing more to say and took his seat. The pianist walked to the piano, cheered by the enthusiastic applause of the students. The young performer turned to the composers and asked permission to play only the outer movements. Dr. Fitzgerald abruptly stated, "if you are going to play one movement, play the last."

For the next 40 minutes the composition seminar watched and listened to an amazing young pianist who jolted back and forth between passages that were so soft and minimalist you felt the work must be coming to an end. Conversely, there were some passages that required an exhausting, virtuosic pace that must have been physically difficult for the performer. During the performance I carefully observed the undergraduates. Almost all of them sat very intently and listened with apparent interest to the performance. I was impressed by their endurance, especially since I found it difficult to concentrate on the music for the entire movement. While observing the students during the piano performance my mind drifted and I began to reflect on the words and demeanor of the faculty composer who had spoken before the work began.

His words, like his music, were passionate and unapologetic. It was obvious to the audience that he believed the need to speak of one's music was secondary to the need to hear it. At no point did he seem to sell or market his work or ideas; they were his own and it seemed as if the audience's perception of them were of little or no consequence. As I looked over at the young faces of the undergraduate composers who were dutifully enjoying the performance, I wondered how the culture of academy influenced them. In many ways I felt as if I had returned to a reality and space that I once knew and revered as a composer, a safe haven away from pressures of the outside world. What mattered most in this room was the conviction of one's voice and the courage to have one's work performed. I smiled, and for a moment allowed my own nostalgic heart to remember my own romantic notions of being a composer.

After the work ended, the audience enthusiastically applauded and students quickly reached down for their backpacks to make a speedy exit. At this point, Dr. Green introduced me to the group. I briefly explained the topic of this study and asked for volunteers. Afterwards, five undergraduate composers circled around me; I gave them each my business card and offered to buy them coffee in exchange for their time. I was thrilled to see that one of the five students who had shown interest in the study was the one female composer in that group. Even though I had not previously considered the differences in compositional identity that could be a result of gender, I was interested in exploring any possible connection. The next week I received four emails from three males and one female who agreed to participate.

Selection of the Participants

Criteria

The criteria established to select participants in this study were: 1) students currently enrolled in an undergraduate composition degree program as a major; 2) traditional aged undergraduates between 17-24 years; 3) students who were enrolled full-time. Creswell (2005) categorizes this approach to participant selection as convenience sampling, cautioning that “the researcher cannot say with confidence that the individuals are representative of the population however, the sample can provide useful information for and answering questions and hypotheses” (p. 149).

Introduction to the Four Composers

Maureen. Maureen is a 22-year-old senior majoring in music composition. Although born in New Jersey, Maureen’s family moved to a rural farm in Maine when she was 5 years old. Maureen began playing the piano at an early age. In middle school she began formal piano lessons and playing the trombone and guitar. It was also during this time that Maureen became interested in creating music; she was especially interested in graphing and notating musical ideas. In high school Maureen realized her passion for composing music and began private music theory lessons to further her understanding of harmony. During Maureen’s years in college she focused on composing, forgoing concertizing on either the trombone or piano. She is currently concentrating on developing a musical voice that is both expressive and individualistic.

David. David is an 18-year-old freshman majoring in both music composition and engineering. The third of seven children, David was born and raised on a farm in rural Pennsylvania. He began playing the piano at a very early age and mastered the Bastien series for young pianists by the age of 8. He also began improvising at the piano at a young age; he recalls improvising at the same time he began reading music. David labels his improvisations as 'diddling'— a process of extending and varying musical ideas from repertoire he performs at the piano. In college David continues to advance his piano skills by taking piano lessons. Compositionally, David is concerned with writing music that is advanced and worthy of the praise of his teacher and peers.

Reese. Reese is a 23-year-old fifth year senior pursuing degrees in music composition and psychology. He was born and raised in a small New England college town. Reese received piano lessons from an early age with an adept teacher, yet he readily discloses that he is not proficient as a pianist. Although Reese's primary outlet for creativity is music, he enjoys participating in all of the arts and prefers to identify himself as an artist as well as a composer. Reese graduated weeks after our sixth and final interview for this study. Because we have continued to correspond I have learned that Reese moved to New York City to pursue a career in musical theater. In his last correspondence he stated that he had happily accepted a job as an intern for a major music publisher.

Henry. Henry is a rising senior, 21 years old and pursuing degrees in music composition and recording arts. Henry is from a small suburb just east of a metropolitan city in the South. Henry began studying piano at the age of 6 and the cello at 9. He

began composing at the piano in 9th grade but didn't seriously consider majoring in composition until his senior year of high school. For Henry, writing music is a way to connect with his religious faith; it is a vehicle for personal reflection and sharing his beliefs with others. Compositionally, Henry is concerned with advancing his harmonic languages through complex counterpoints within a conservative tonal framework.

Time Frame

The preparation, fieldwork, and completion of this study spanned over 16 months, not including the pilot. After completing the pilot study I made use of several months time to determine the specific direction of this study. After re-reading the work of several prominent researchers within the field of music and identity research, I honed my research questions and interview questions to best frame the concept of an undergraduate compositional identity. The data collection for the project began in April of 2006 and ended with the last correspondence with participants in July of 2007. Participants were first contacted in January of 2007 with each completing six interviews throughout the spring. The interviews took place in a variety of locations as I accommodated students' busy schedules by meeting in places that were most convenient to them. Consequently, interviews occurred in a variety of settings: local coffee shops, restaurants, libraries, and rehearsal spaces. Each of the six interviews with the four participants lasted approximately 90 minutes.

Data Collection

The data were gathered by conducting semi-structured interviews, obtaining correspondence from the composers, and notes from my research journal. Interviews were conducted with four self-selected participants, all undergraduate composition majors, registered full-time, and between the ages of 17 and 22. Questions for the interviews were tested during the pilot study and honed for this study. Before beginning this study I revised and practiced my interview protocol with an undergraduate composition student that I have known personally for many years. This practice session allowed me to rehearse the revised interview protocol. Because semistructured interviews are designed to foster an interpersonal relationship and encourage free dialogue, I needed to be very comfortable with the questions and the protocol. It also allowed me to judge the appropriate time needed to complete each of the six interviews. The six, semi-structured interviews each focused on specific research themes. Each interview posed questions designed to illuminate prominent issues that emerged from the pilot study.

The focus of the first interview was to gain awareness of student's personal history, as well as descriptions of past educational and musical experiences. The second interview surveyed how students described their experiences of entering the academy and how those experiences influenced technical and affective parts of their writing. Additionally, the interview addressed how students described themselves in relation to their undergraduate musical experience. The third interview concentrated on how past musical and non-musical events influenced the participant's current perspective.

Specific themes to be addressed were 1) sense of self in social and historical contexts; 2) clarification of self-concept; 3) sense of self from valued others; and 4) understanding of one's culture. The fourth interview centered on composers' descriptions of their current and past compositions. Themes included the composer's sense of self in response to feedback from valued others and socially constructed notions of composer's roles. The fifth interview focused on the subject's view of his/her future vocational aspirations. Topics covered within the fifth interview include the student's perception of socially constructed musical roles as well as integration of perceived musical roles. The sixth interview was a reprise of the first five, providing an opportunity to explore issues that required further clarification. This interview allowed students to share personal reflections they felt while completing the study. Appendix A contains a detailed listing of questions posed in the six interviews.

To establish and make participation in the study less invasive to their lives, I met participants at locations and times that were convenient for them. Documents and artifacts included correspondence we shared via email, music they had previously written or were working on, and concert programs that included their work. Following qualitative traditions set forth by Glesne (2006), I maintained a research journal of my thoughts and impressions during the research process.

Coding and Organizing Data

"Coding is a progressive process of sorting and defining and defining and sorting scraps of collective data (i.e., observation notes, interview transcripts, memos,

documents, and notes from relevant literature) that are applicable to your research" (Glesne, 2006, p. 152). Glesne's definition of coding highlights the complexity and density associated with the process of coding. Coding processes require researchers to organize data into meaningful sequences while concurrently sorting and defining emerging themes. Simply categorizing themes that immediately or suddenly emerge from data remains insufficient (Creswell, 2005), because coding is a multifaceted process involving "naming, renaming, assigning, re-assigning, relocating, clumping, merging, dividing, locating, relocating and organizing" (Glesne, 2006, p. 153). Such complexity inherent to the coding processes, especially with regards to the intricacies of qualitative inquiry, can easily overwhelm neophyte researchers (Glesne, 2006).

The complexities of qualitative inquiry are a source of consternation for many Ph.D. candidates whose entry into comprehensive research entails a qualitative dissertation. The inherent intricacies of the coding process, coupled with few existing examples of pedagogical strategies, make it difficult for new qualitative researchers to execute large-scale research. Methodological literature reflects the difficulties of performing and learning coding processes. For instance, Barrett (2007) suggests that although methodological literature often discusses the complexity and function of coding, few pedagogical strategies exist to assist inexperienced researchers in developing their qualitative research skills. "Teaching or making sense of data is similarly challenging. The way interpretation is described in the methodological literature gives some sense of how difficult it is to guide the beginning researcher's efforts" (2007, p. 419).

In order to clarify coding within research, Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002) call for researchers to clearly articulate their coding processes to facilitate readers' comprehension of the research. However this is a challenge for qualitative dissertation authors as they balance issues of data-gathering, coding, and interpretation within their first major research effort.

Data were organized in the following steps: 1) transcription of audio tapes; 2) re-reading and checking of all transcripts; 3) constructing storyboards for each case; 4) writing narratives for each composer based on storyboards; 5) organizing and summarizing comparisons across cases. The only non-traditional method I employed while organizing data organization was the use of a storyboard to code and process material. There is precedent for utilizing storyboards as tools for organizing data within educational research. Bunch (1991) describes the effective use of storyboards for organizing data. "Storyboarding enables organization and sequencing, expansion and reduction of content, text development, and formulation of sensitive evaluation criteria" (p. 1). Smith (2005) developed storyboards to help facilitate the construction of narratives in her dissertation. Smith used the storyboard to not only collect and organize data, but also as a tool to facilitate member checking.

The use of a storyboard to code and manage data seemed organic to this study for several reasons. First, I am a tactile learner and require visual cues in order to process and organize data. I believe this stems from my years as a composer and my tactile process for writing music. While some composers are able to write music using a computer software program, I still compose using pencil and paper so I am able to

clearly see my work, as a whole, in front of me. When composing on a computer much of the music is not in clear sight of the composer. Drawing upon one's strengths as a musician to assist in the research process has been addressed by numerous music researchers. Bresler (1993) suggests that music education researchers "trust their musical ways of knowing to inform their education research" (p. 10). In this study I employed a storyboard technique because the method seemed organic to my own analytical processes. It was after I began working with the data I realized that I was coding data in a manner that was similar to my compositional process.

The idea of constructing a large-scale storyboard on my office wall is not my own. The idea to use large-scale visual representations was one I saw years ago while watching an interview on a Bravo television series. On this particular episode of *Inside the Actors Studio,* the writing team responsible for the series *Six Feet Under* explained that before a 10-episode series began they placed large sheets of paper throughout a room to help plot and visualize themes as they transformed. Each episode was graphed on a separate sheet of paper they called a storyboard. As they looked across the ten episodes or storyboards they could easily graph and manipulate the way each of the show's characters would develop. This approach was a perfect fit both with the way I work and learn and in facilitating a narrative approach in my writing.

For this study I constructed large storyboards by posting 4-6 feet tall by 2 feet wide pieces of paper along my office wall. Each composer or case was assigned to a piece of paper posted along the wall. To code the data I began by concentrating on one composer and listening to his/her interview transcripts. Because of the chronological

nature of narrative design, I divided each storyboard into three sections, recollection of past, description of present, and view of future. Furthermore, major themes of environmental influences, exposure to music, and role of key others were given separate colors when posting themes on the storyboard. After each of the four storyboards was filled with appropriate themes I began pasting larger sections of dialogue that supported each theme heading. After this process was complete I was left with major themes, and secondary supporting topics as well as the composers' dialogue all clearly labeled on the storyboards.

Validating Findings

In this study I employed several strategies to review the accuracy of the data collection and analysis. "Validating findings means that the researcher determines the accuracy or credibility of the findings through strategies such as member checking or triangulation" (Creswell, 2005, p. 252). Three primary forms of validation recommended by Creswell were utilized in this study: triangulation, member checking, and external audits. I end this section, and this chapter, by describing researcher reflexivity and its use in this study.

Triangulation, the first strategy I employed, is the process of corroborating evidence from multiple sources in order to verify the emergence of a theme or trend (Glesne, 2006). As described earlier in this chapter, I asked students to bring examples of their compositions to the interviews. The compositions were important for two reasons—in addition to being a valuable source of data, they served as a prompt for

stimulating responses from the participants. The students' compositions allowed me to view and observe topics and ideas participants presented during the interview process. Furthermore, the compositions helped me view themes that emerged as I looked across the cases.

The second strategy I used was member checking. Member checking is a process of asking participants to review findings to determine if conclusions are accurate (2005). In this study, I asked participants to review their six interview transcripts for accuracy and examine the narratives I constructed based on their accounts. The errors participants found in the interview transcripts included misinterpretations of composer's names and references to obscure musical works. The participants' responses to the narratives were very positive, as they each enjoyed seeing their words put into writing. Additionally, they each appreciated that I altered references to their personal lives to such a degree they could not be recognized or identified.

Next, qualitative researchers often ask outsiders to review their work in order to obtain an outsider's perspective; this process is often described as an external audit (Creswell, 2005). An external audit encourages an independent evaluation of research practices and illuminates strengths and weaknesses within research practices. I selected an auditor who was a university professor familiar with qualitative research methodologies and the field of composition. Several aspects of the research were reviewed by the auditor including journal entries, transcripts of interviews, storyboards, coding lists, and excerpts of Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5. The auditor reviewed my process

of collecting and coding data as well as the construction of storyboards. The auditor's suggestions were utilized in the construction and presentation of the participants' narratives.

Reflexivity and Research Journal

The last strategy I utilized in this study was researcher reflexivity. This process allows the researcher to reveal biases or assumptions that may influence the study. Throughout the course of this study, I maintained a research journal in order to describe and reflect upon my own experiences and how they shaped my perspective as a researcher. The purpose of researcher reflexivity is not to remove bias, instead, it is to make the reader and the researcher aware of beliefs and biases that sway research (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). On numerous occasions I found myself confronting issues of bias as described in the journal entries below:

January 25th, 2007

This is the first time I really have understood what it means by research bias—I felt myself confronting issues during the interviews with the four composers. I noticed that when meeting the participants and observing their mannerisms I tend to compare them to friends of mine who were composers. I find myself comparing the participants to peers and thinking of them of shadows of old friends rather than as unique individuals. Once I made the resolution to not compare the students to the ways I remembered my peers, it became easier to treat each participant as a distinct

composer. The key for me is constantly reminding myself to not project the personalities or characteristics of my peers onto the participants in the study.

February 12th, 2007

I often wonder what leads people to major in composition. Even while earning a degree in composition at a reputable conservatory, I never understood what motivated my peers. Perhaps the most baffling part of being a composer is the silence that seems to surround the culture.

As a composition student there were so many questions I wanted to ask my peers and mentors, but perhaps because of my ego or pride, I remained silent. Or, on the rare occasion I did engage a friend in conversation concerning their compositional process or vocational outlook, it would seem that both of us lacked the words to share how or why we composed. It also seemed as though asking someone about the creative process was taboo or a sign that you weren't comfortable with your own creative voice.

When I reflect back on the experience of earning a degree in composition I always felt separated from those around me. Even during composition seminars when composers were encouraged to share their writings, experiences, and motivations, I felt that few students honestly presented their influences and writing styles. I still have close ties to some of the composers who were in the music program the same time as I. Recently, while talking to a college friend, I asked if she felt the same way I did about being isolated and lonely during her time in college. She agreed with my opinion and joked that everyone wanted to live up to the role of a 'proper composer'. I knew exactly what she meant as soon as she spoke. I remembered that students who were considered

the most aloof, dark, and elusive were often revered as the most artistic, intellectual, and wrongly misunderstood. What baffled me is how the stereotypical narrative of a distant, isolated, misunderstood composer is still prevalent in today's musical culture. Earning a master's degree in composition was one of the most mystifying experiences of my life. Although obtaining a degree in composition does provide valuable insight into the culture of composers, in many ways the experience raised more issues than it answered.

Undoubtedly, my past experiences have shaped the way I view the experience of an undergraduate composition student. Lincoln and Guba (2000) state that researchers should constantly interrogate themselves in order to remain as honest as possible about the relationship between the researcher and the research. By maintaining a research journal, I was able to reflect upon and acknowledge my personal biases in this project.

Summary

In this chapter I reviewed the methodological underpinnings in this study. Specifically, I addressed sampling procedures, choice of case study and narrative design, data analysis procedures, and verification processes. In the next chapter, I present the narratives of each participant as well as my process for utilizing a narrative approach within my work.

CHAPTER 4

COMPOSERS' NARRATIVES

This chapter presents a narrative for each of the four composers who participated in this study. Before presenting the first composer's narrative, I review reasons for utilizing a narrative design within this study. Additionally, I provide a description of how the narratives were written, highlighting the organization and structure as well as the process of constructing each narrative. Finally, I present a brief introduction of the composers that speaks to my experience of getting to know them.

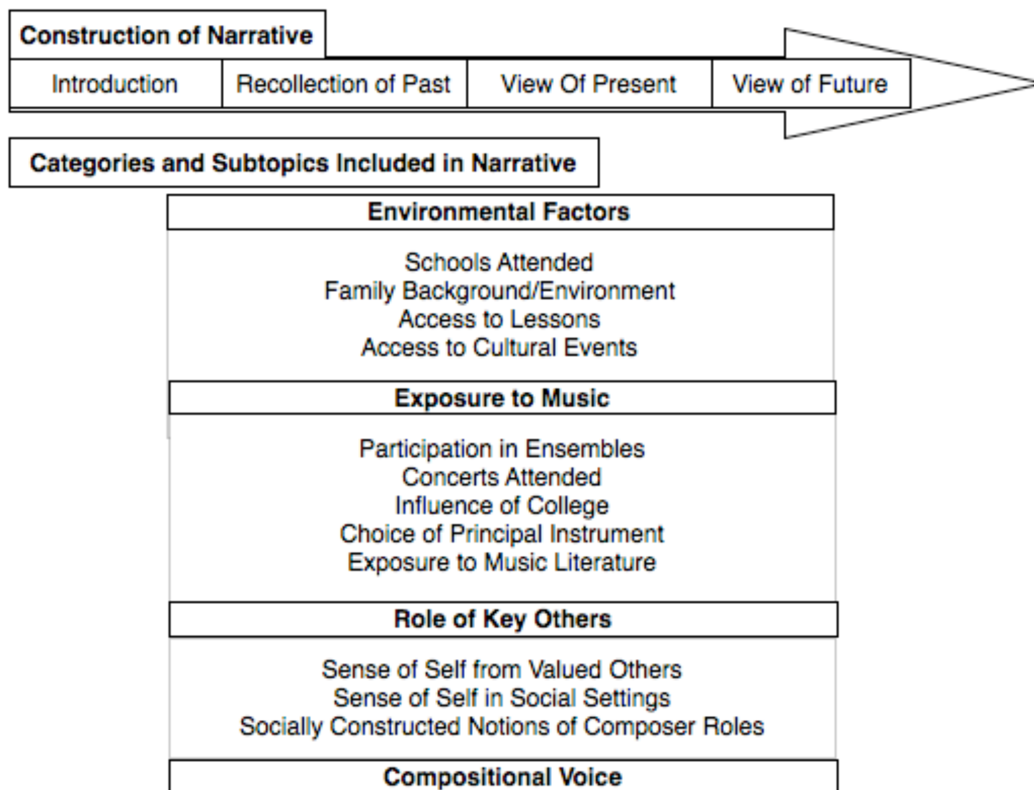
Choosing a Narrative Lens

Describing and outlining the identity of an undergraduate composer is intricate for a number of reasons. The undergraduate years are a tumultuous time for young people, as they often confront difficult life decisions while often feeling isolated (Chickering, 1969). Compound the stresses of college life with a degree program that engages creative minds and it is easy to envision the complexities that surround an undergraduate composition major. Due to the personal nature of undergraduate composition majors' experiences, I employ a narrative lens to present each composer's personal viewpoint. Narrative inquiry is a useful and powerful qualitative research instrument that illuminates subtleties of the human experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). By providing a narrative section within this study I offer the reader a full, rich, representation of each participant's perspective.

Constructing the Narratives

As described in Chapter 3, each of the interviews was coded by creating wall-sized story boards for each of the four composers. I grouped the themes that emerged during the coding process into the topical areas Davidson (2002) presents in her description of performers' identity with modification to fit the composer. In addition to grouping topics around categories provided by Davidson, I included descriptions of the way composers described their compositional voice or style. This helps explain how composers view their own writing and provides perspective into the role of outside influences on their compositional development. Figure 4.1 presents a complete representation of the framework used to construct the narrative.

Figure 4.1. Structure of each composer's narrative



To structure each composer's narrative, I organized each storyboard into three sections: recollection of past experiences, depiction of present, and portrayal of future.
By organizing data into past, present, and future perspectives I was able to arrange the narratives chronologically. This was done to accommodate Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) suggestion that narratives should be told in such a way the reader understands the events of a story in reference to the age of the subject. The one deviation I made from the presentation of past, present, and future descriptions is the inclusion of a brief introduction or vignette that will help the reader appreciate the individuality of each composer.

The Composers' Narratives

Meeting Maureen

When Maureen walked into the coffee shop the first thing I noticed about her was her confidence. As I stood to greet her, Maureen approached me, shook my hand confidently, and introduced herself. Before I could begin speaking Maureen began a conversation about the large number of people waiting in line for coffee.

Maureen is a rising senior, but her looks would never suggest her age or year in school. She is short, petite, and even without make-up, could be easily misidentified as a young teenager. Maureen was fun to talk to; her lively personality was exuberant and playful. Her eyes seemed to dance as she talked, and even our trivial, introductory conversations exuded energy and vigor. Maureen was quick to engage me in conversation, not about her, but about my experiences conducting this research and my

experiences as a composer. After the first few minutes meeting with Maureen I began noticing some distinctive characteristics that, at first, went unnoticed. For example, she had a nose piercing, her eyebrow was pierced, and she had a small tattoo just above her wrist. While her small, well-kept demeanor led me to first think she might be timid, conservative, or shy, I found that she was none of these things. In reality she was forward and assertive, she cursed freely, and was straightforward and unapologetic about her personal beliefs.

Although Maureen was confident and open when discussing general topics, when the 'official' part of our interviews began, her demeanor changed. When she was asked to discuss her musical experiences I found both her tone of voice and pace of conversation shifted. Although I felt Maureen was always honest while responding, there was also a level of timidity in her answers, as if she were censoring or monitoring what she said. I soon realized that she was taking her time and answering my questions as fully and thoroughly as possible. She stated, "if I'm not giving you enough detail, or if you want me to try and answer again, just let me " (Interview, April 11, 2007).

After spending more time with Maureen I realized she was very cognizant about describing the aspects of her life. She is a straight-A student, and her compositions possess a level of detail and exactness that are impressive. I often worried that Maureen's hesitant pace was a result of concern that she was being recorded. I eventually recognized, however, that she was simply exacting in her speech, as she was in every aspect of her life. After the interviews were completed I asked Maureen to read the transcripts of the interview. Because of the thoroughness of her answers she made

very few revisions or comments to the interview transcript. Throughout the interviews, Maureen was always gracious and sociable, and from our dialogue via emails she seemed genuinely excited about the opportunity to discuss her experiences as a composer.

> Thank you for the opportunity to reflect on my experiences as a composer. It was honestly the first time any one ever listened or cared about the way I perceive myself and my writing. I learned a lot. (e-mail correspondence, May 11th, 2007)

Although at first, Maureen appeared light-hearted and jovial, it soon became apparent that she takes herself quite seriously. She took this experience seriously, as she seems to take everything seriously.

Maureen's Narrative

This is something I have never told anyone before. It's hard to explain, I guess that's why. But recently, while attending a symphony performance and watching the musical score in front of me, I was put into a meditative state, and I came to a realization I had never understood before. I realized something about my music, about myself, and the way I write. I imagined watching myself compose, and I was reaching through a vertical plane of water, pulling, trying to draw something out that I can't really understand, that I can barely make out and is hazy. It's like there is a tree on the other side of the water, and I'm looking through the falling water straining to see, and I'm pulling the tree through the water but the pressure of the falling water is too strong.

I pull the branches through from the other side so I can recreate the tree as precisely as possible on my side. But it's a struggle because the tree continually seems to morph and change, bending in the wind. The veil of falling water acts as a curtain, preventing me from seeing the whole picture, the whole tree.

I think that's what my music is like. It's like in my mind I can see the tree, but when I try to write down my images it's like I'm pulling something through a haze. What I reconstruct on paper, or what I write isn't ever really what I imagine; it's what I can pull through the water. I guess, in the end, what I reconstruct on this side of the falling water, however intended, is my music. I think the water is my conscious mind meeting my subconscious mind, or the line between the inside world and the outside world, maybe I guess, something like that. Maybe it's just where the inside of my head stops and the outside world begins, and it's getting through that and trying to keep myself intact as I go from one world to another—from dreams to my reality. I think my time here in college is about learning how to manage those things in my life that affect my writing but that I don't quite yet understand.

In many ways, I've always been a dreamer. Growing up in rural Maine, I remember my parents never understood why I would get lost staring off into space. I've always had this sort of creative imagination that took me to other places, other worlds. I guess it was hard for my parents to understand me—my dad is an engineer, and my mom is not what you would call artistic. The most art-filled experience we ever had was singing *Happy Birthday* three times a year. But, I have to give credit to my parents; even though they never understood me, they supported me. They never pushed, or made

me do anything; they were always just there. OK, so maybe they pushed a little. My mom said if she had to pay for piano lessons, I had to practice. She would place an egg timer on the piano and say that I had to play until the timer went off. Looking back that couldn't have been more than 5 minutes, but whenever I'm forced to do anything, I'm pretty resentful. But besides that small bit of trivia, my parents were overwhelmingly loving and supportive. If I wanted to play an instrument, whatever it was, they were cool with that, and if I wanted to stop, they would allow me to stop. I think they understood that I was a free spirit, and I needed room to explore and find my own way.

I guess sometimes I don't give my parents enough credit. When I showed a small bit of interest in the piano, they decided that the old hand-me-down piano in the house was not good enough. They bought me a beautiful, new, grand piano to encourage me to practice, and it worked. They always wanted me to have the best of everything, yet interestingly, I never felt spoiled. I guess they knew what was important, and they considered buying a piano, and encouraging my music, to be an investment in my education.

I think most parents would have been upset when their children constantly changed their mind concerning what instrument they wanted to play. But almost every other year, I would announce that I wanted to learn a new instrument. Starting in the 4th grade I played trombone, then I picked up guitar, then piano, then sax—I just dabbled with things and enjoyed manipulating the sounds of the instrument—they were very supportive of that. They could have pressured me to only focus or concentrate my musical interests towards the piano, and that would be reasonable, given their

investment in the grand piano, but they didn't. There were times I took lessons with certain instruments, and would quit, and just move on.

My playfulness extended beyond the field of music. I loved sports, and enjoyed playing on various community sporting teams. One year I played softball, the next year volleyball. I rarely played the same sport more than one year in a row. Sports were easy for me, and I enjoyed the challenge of learning something new each year.

As far as moments in my life that I can pinpoint as important, or transformative, I can think of a couple that were really influential. I guess the first that comes to mind occurred in seventh grade. My dad, who is a computer geek, brought home a notational software program. I think he did it because he had seen me scribble basic musical ideas on paper, and I'll explain more about the scribbles in a minute. To my surprise he had noticed that I was writing, which was strange because it was not something I ever talked about or shared with anyone in my family. It was so sweet of my dad to think of me, and I was flattered that he had noticed my interests. I spent a lot of time with the notational software program; I loved the idea that I could play with notations and then hear them played back to me. But, at the same time I struggled and was frustrated because there were things I wanted to write but couldn't. I quickly became irritated because I realized that I didn't understand how music worked; I was missing something.

As far as my experiences with the scribbles, well that's harder to explain. I never really understood why I began writing; it was just something I wanted to do, and so I did it. It's how it's always been. I remember when I was much younger, in elementary school, I saw blank staff paper in the room and I thought to myself, "Why

can't I just write my own music?" Then I thought, oh, I wonder if my teacher would give me my own staff paper so I could try to write something. And when she did give me staff paper, I remember getting really, really excited as I tried to write things down. I can't explain why I was so excited about writing on my own, there was just something about drawing or creating something visual, that could later be heard, that was so basic and appealing. I think I had a really vivid imagination and I realized as I was writing things down, I had this vivid sonic world inside my head. For the first time, as I began scribbling ideas, I realized I could conjure up a world of sound that was inside my head and completely my own. A sound I never realized was there, but was there. And I was excited to tap into this space and explore this new world of sound, which seemed without boundary or limit.

I always kept my composing private. I guess it was because my scribbles were not really music, or what could be recognized as music, and maybe to some degree, I was embarrassed to share what I considered at the time to be doodles. It wasn't until high school that I started thinking about sharing my idea of writing music with friends or teachers.

I had one teacher in particular who meant a lot to me. She was my elementary school teacher and not only did she teach me elementary school music, she continued to give me piano lessons, trombone lessons, whatever I wanted to learn. She was my musical guide all the way through my elementary, middle, and high school years. She meant a lot to me, and in many ways had a significant impact on the way I think about music. It's not that she ever taught me to compose music, or ever wanted me to

compose music, but she provided the foundations that fueled my ability to compose. I never understood why, but she always insisted that I learn music theory and that I understand chords and harmony. Certainly, she taught me things well beyond what was needed to learn the trombone or piano. Maybe she knew that I had an interest in writing, but we never talked about it until my junior year. Yet, her insistence on my learning harmony and vertical structures helped me realize a greater aspect of music. Because of her instruction, by high school I no longer considered music as a single line player. I was thinking much more broadly than that; I was interested in the ways the score looked and how instrument groupings could create different sounds.

But even in high school, I never really thought I would do anything in music. I had all A's and took all of the AP courses that were offered, so I guess, in my mind, I knew I could do anything I wanted. I mean, I loved music; I played trombone in the top ensemble at school and we were pretty good I guess, you know, for a high school group. And, you know, I was in all regional bands and all state bands playing the trombone, and I guess I enjoyed the social aspect of being in the group, but the music never really did anything for me. And, of course I had to deal with marching band because my director made me, and it was horrible.

It wasn't until my senior year that something happened. It's a moment that's pretty easy to mark down in my life, one of those things or moments that you never forget. I was attending a camp in the Midwest the summer before my senior year for gifted performers and composers. I really had no intention of thinking of composing during the camp; I was there because I had auditioned on trombone. But I went to a

class where we listened to new music and discussed what we felt and thought. During the class the professor played Berio's *Sinfonia* and Ligeti's *Atmospheres*, and it was like I was totally dumbstruck. I realized that, up until that point in my life, I don't think music had ever really resonated with me. I mean, I had played music, but I never really understood music. When I heard those two pieces something reverberated inside me, and I was like, this is music I have never known before; I have never known this sound. The only way I can describe it is to say it was like a dark cloud being lifted, with lightning reaching out of it. It was an image, a connection to images inside my head. That's what it is. It's visual images and sound, and this connection. When I heard those two pieces I think it was the first time in my life where I heard sounds to match images that I had in my head. I will never forget that moment. It was a moment when I said, I want to write music like this.

For me, hearing this music during this summer music institute was almost like hearing for the first time, or finding something that was edgy and rebellious, so it is easy to understand why I was attracted to it. I knew there were people around me in the class that day that hated the music of Ligeti and Berio, and their strong reaction and disdain for it only fueled my attraction. I have to admit, I liked the idea that I could write art music that was rebellious, because there has always been something rebellious inside of me. I mean, I got a nose piercing when I was in high school. I think that defiance follows me into my musical thinking. I also realized during that camp that dammit, I may not be that good of a performer, but I can be a great composer. After the summer institute, I went back to my senior year of high school a changed person. I

knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to write; I wanted to create my own sound. I remember telling my teacher I had studied with since elementary school that I wanted to write music. She was thrilled and encouraged me. She knew that I had to start writing music that would be appropriate for applying to an undergraduate music program. I think there was some doubt in my mind that I would be good enough to be a composer. But I applied to five or six schools for music composition and was accepted to all of them. I knew then I had what it takes to be a composer. I figured that if all of these music programs all agreed that I was good enough to be accepted, then I must be good enough to make it as a professional. Ah, the joy of youth.

But then I got to college and boy, was it a world away from what I was expecting. In high school I was always the best at everything, and I was used to everyone telling me how I could do no wrong, and how brilliant I was. I don't think I was prepared to be a small fish in a very big pond. I studied trombone at school, because I had to as part of a performance requirement. And while I knew I wasn't God's gift to the trombone, I had successfully auditioned for all-state groups and thought I could hold my own. But I remember taking lessons my first year, and while sitting in that small office with the trombone teacher, I could feel the disdain in his voice as he talked to me. I knew he was thinking, "My God, why is this girl playing this instrument." I could feel his hate, and he looked at me with scorn, and I knew he thought that this girl, me, could never make it as a brass player. I mean, I got through it; I took enough lessons to meet the requirement. Thank God it's over. I think, in that trombone studio, I met the first person in my life who didn't applaud me. That is to say,

my entire life, ever since elementary school, I have always been the gifted one; everyone always told me how smart I was, and how I could do anything I wanted to do. That's why it didn't surprise me that I could get staff paper and write music if I wanted to. I guess I was really uninhibited and knew that I could try anything and be smart enough to be successful. It was tough for me because being a performer was the first thing in my life I ever failed at. I am thankful though, that in my heart, I knew that I had a musical voice as a composer. But you know, I still think it may have something to do with the fact that I was a girl playing a brass instrument. But, it really never really bothered me that I wasn't the best performer in the trombone studio because I think I knew you don't have to be strong performer to be a good composer. I just think if you are not as strong of a performer you have to work harder, to kind of understand the whole performance aspect, and how it works in real life. There is this whole other aspect of performance psychology and their whole mentality that you have to tap into. I think part of being a composer is understanding the mind of the performer. And I think in undergraduate study, I've come to understand that as I have befriended performance majors.

I think when I started attending the university as a composition major, a lot of things changed for lots of reasons. I think it was because finally I was around musicians who were as passionate as I am. One of the oddest things about being in a community of composers is that I define myself more by deciding I don't want to be like the others rather than trying to conform to what the other composers are doing. I mean I don't think there are a lot of student composers I think I can relate to in terms of how they

write or think about music. But over the past three years, there have been a couple that I can, a few. And those close few have been invaluable to me, just in terms of learning how to articulate things. It has always been difficult for me to explain my music and my process. I mean, I've always had these sounds in my head, and the reason I write down music instead of words is because sound best expresses my thoughts. So that's why it's hard for me to talk about my composing; I simply lack the words. But I know it's important that I learn how to articulate what I am doing and why I am doing it. So, just having other composers around me and listening to them talk allows me to dissect my own ideas and self-reflect on my process. So, I guess, in the end, being around composers has had a bigger impact on me than I realize, or perhaps more than I would like to think.

I think I have learned a lot about myself as a composer from the viewpoint of performance majors. I would have never thought performance majors would have such contempt for composers. But many of them do, I mean, there are two camps. Either they don't understand composers but have respect for what we are trying to do; or, have little respect or understanding for why we write music when we are not a child prodigy and write like Beethoven. But, I'm fine with the close-minded performers; they can just sit in a practice room memorizing Mozart and stay close-minded to any new ideas or ways of thinking. Those are the type of people I don't want around me or in my life.

I'm lucky that I have found a few really open-minded performers in my life who push and encourage me to write music. It means a lot to me when performers describe their pleasure with my music; in many ways I think that is the greatest compliment.

Their positive energy really helps my creative process, I mean they allow me to workshop pieces and ask questions and carry on a dialogue that helps my music grow and mature. I think in many ways, some of my best pieces are those I have written alongside performers, and having them there to be able to ask questions. Work shopping and rehearsing music is one of the best ways to allow your music to grow.

I think there is a dark side in being an undergraduate composer as well, something people don't really talk about. That is the pressure that I feel surrounds me. It seems like there is this constant need or expectation for me to find my own voice, to write something that is new and unique. Not just now, but for the rest of my life. I do want, so badly, to make my music special, and make people sit up and pay attention to me. But I always feel like maybe it's just me. I'm sometimes unsure of myself, especially when I listen to something that sounds forced one way or another, or for whatever reason isn't as satisfying as a musical experience. I don't want to write something that people think is contrived or too academic. But, the academic setting does force me to write things that maybe I wouldn't do otherwise.

I wonder sometimes if that veil of water I see when I struggle to write is the expectation of my teachers and peers to write something they believe appropriate or fitting. Maybe when I get out of school, the pressure will be gone, and I will be able to see the tree more clearly on the other side, and recreate more clearly what is in my mind. But for now, in order to make it, and what I mean by make it, for people to take me seriously, I've got to reconstruct and see the tree people want me to see.

See, the first thing people ask when they're deciding whether or not to take you seriously is, "What competitions have you won?" and I hate that shit. I mean, my music is not competition music; it's not the type of music I know judges want to see. But I'm also guilty of the fact that when I look at the bios of composers, the first thing I look for is a list of competitions they have won. So, maybe it's a double standard. I guess, when it comes down to it, I always say you should stick to your voice and just write, but in the end, winning competitions does matter; it does help you. It's not something I think about everyday, but maybe subconsciously it is there. I know that in order for my music to be played or win an award, certain criteria have to be met. But what I hate are my peers who just obsess about winning awards and having their pieces played. I think they are selling out and I refuse to do that. In the end, maybe it is just my rebellious nature, but I try not to care about what other may think. I really, really don't care.

I guess that's why being the only girl in the program doesn't really bother me. Fact is, I'm going to do what I want to do, come hell or high water, and that's just the way it is. From some people, I get the vibe that I'm not being taken seriously, you know, because of what I write or because I am a girl. Or, maybe others think I'm brave or courageous, or something like that because of what I write or what I am doing. But, truthfully, I couldn't care less about either of them; I'm going to do what I want to do.

I've always been weirded out by this notion that just because I am a girl I shouldn't be included in certain things. I mean, my senior year of high school, one of the reasons I wrote a piece was because it was Women's History Month and they asked, because you know, I'm a girl and people knew that I liked to write music, that I should

write something. But, during the performance, I felt weird about it; I mean, that I was singled out. And a few years ago, in college, we had a woman composer come in and give a guest lecture. And afterwards she invited me to lunch, just me and her, because we could talk about what it was like to be a woman composer. And I was flattered, and I went, but thought it was strange, I mean it was then, really for the first time that I felt I was different or being singled out. And, at lunch, we never really talked about anything concerning women's issues. I feel conflicted about it. I am lucky that I grew up in a strong nurturing environment where I was given the confidence to say that I don't give a damn. But, in general, maybe girls are treated differently. I think it has a lot to do with inhibition as far as society is concerned; I think boys and girls are treated differently from time to time. You know, girls should do these things while boys do the other. It's just the media feeding us, telling us that we are supposed to be beautiful and thin, maybe it does impact girls. Maybe I don't think about it as much as I should; honestly I don't consider myself different from my peers, even though I am the only girl in the program.

There is one thing that pisses me off about the way people perceive my music. I'm not sure it's a girl thing or whatever but they are always surprised that my music is as difficult as it is. I never know what to think of that—are girls expected to be more simple? Is it a gender thing? I mean, the same female composer who invited me to lunch looked over my music and said, you know, no one is ever going to play your music because it is so difficult and complex. And my response back was, so what, this is my music—it's the way I see it, and this is the way I want it to be. And I can find

people to perform it so I want it to be what it needs to be. I think she was stunned; she kept repeating that no one would ever play or buy my music. But I kept responding to her, I do not care. I think it was during that public discussion that I decided I didn't want to be like her. I didn't want to write music to simply get performances or win competitions. For now, I want to write the images that are in my head, as clearly as possible for the performers. It needs to be what it needs to be.

I guess I'm like my private teacher that way. He writes whatever he wants to and he finds a way to get it performed. It may take 10 or 20 years to do, but he gets it done. That's my ideal situation and I want to do whatever I have to write my music, if that means getting a day job, fine, whatever. I'm not interested in compromising my musical ideas to get recognition or money; I never will. It bothers me that a visiting woman composer would question me, or anyone else. I mean, should you really question your music? I don't think you should, what's in your head is what is in your heart, and that's what you should reconstruct. There are peers around me that make me completely crazy. They come in all the time asking me: Do you think the violins should do this, or do you think I should make it more playable? Do you think the audience will get this or is it too far out there? It always pisses me off that they ask me, and I always want to tell them that they are asking the wrong person. Not only do I not know, I don't care what the answer is to their questions. I know people may disagree with me about this, and they believe composers should consider the audience, and the performers. But, for me, I am thinking about select audiences, those that really think about music and art, those who are ready to hear a new form of expression. I'm not interested in the common

audience or the common performer. I want to have my music heard by the select few who are willing to expand their musical vocabularies. If I were just interested in thinking about the audience or the performer, then I would just write jazz or popular music. I'm not interested in that whole business side of things—that's why we have popular music. I'm writing for the arts, for my mind.

Call me confident, call me neurotic, I don't care. I guess I am neurotic actually, and that's OK with me. I think it's because I grew up in that small town in Maine where I had to stand out and be different. Not because I wanted to, but because I was considered exceptional and gifted. Because of that, I've always felt the pressure to succeed. I've just taken the attitude that I have to be exceptional, and the best at everything in my study of music. While the pressure is daunting, I have just recently been able to discover a writing style that is distinctive, bold, and original. It is a writing style that I think will be a trademark of my compositions for the rest of my life. I have learned to use the absence of sound and rest as important part of my musical palette and recently conjured up the confidence to insist that my music is worth the audience's investment of time. If I think the audience should wait two or three minutes in silence before the next interlude, then they should.

It's not to say that one should not study others people's styles. I think every composer should study and recreate the master works. I think part of being a composer, especially in school, is learning how others do things. But that's not to say that I have any interest in imitating anyone. I really do want to find that voice of my own. Now that I am almost a senior, for the very first time, when I introduce myself I am OK with

saying that I am a composer. It's because of my confidence in my newfound voice and allowing myself to do what I want to do. I do realize that my bullheadedness may be allowing me to shoot myself in the foot. Anyhow, maybe, who knows, I will not make it as a composer. But, I am willing to take that chance. I mean there are composers out there who are living on commissions alone and that seems fine. Except to say they are leading creative lives bound by restrictions and the restrictions are OK with me. I cannot be suffocated. I hate the thought of someone telling me what kind of instrumentation to use. I will never, never, stray from what my heart tells me to write.

I think in the future my dream idea of being a composer is to have a real job. A job doing something from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. that would pay really good money, you know, like something in marketing where I could use my imagination and creative skills. But then when I leave work and I come home I am able to write music, and just my music. I can continue to get inside my head and write something meaningful and get something truthful out there.

I'm not going to lie and say that I would mind getting commissions and having people hear my music. But I guess in the real world that rarely happens. As far as the future, I just want to continue clarifying my compositional voice and getting it as honest as possible. I'm not sure why I have that waterfall in mind, that veil that prevents me from writing what it perfectly clear in my head. I just know that I don't want to make excuses and be the type of composer who lives with regret. I really don't worry about the future that much. So far, things have worked out pretty well. I'm following my dream of writing and I get to spend everyday thinking about a field of study I am

passionate about. I know I still have a lot of growing and maturing to do, and I have a lot left to learn. That is why I am applying to graduate school.

Meeting David

David was the first student I met when I visited the university to ask for participants in this study. He had arrived for the composition seminar thirty minutes early. It was obvious from David's nervous energy that he was eager for the composition seminar to begin. After we both sat in a few minutes of uncomfortable silence, I introduced myself. With eyes downcast, David shook my hand, introducing himself in such a quiet manner that I found it difficult to hear what he was saying. Judging by David's very youthful appearance, I assumed he was a freshman; his introductions confirmed my estimation. David is about 5'6", with jet-black hair sloppily combed to the side, his face thin and almost mousy in appearance. On the day we met he was wearing torn jeans, a t-shirt and small, black glasses that looked like antiques. Conversation proved difficult at first; his shy demeanor made me worry that perhaps I was making him uncomfortable, but a few minutes later, he began speaking more loudly, and within five or ten minutes, even made regular eye contact. Despite his withdrawn demeanor, David grew more confident when talking to me about my experiences as an undergraduate composer. He was quick to share his similar experiences and explained that he was by far the youngest person in the composition program. As he told me this he sat more forward, obviously proud to be in the program at such a young age. I asked David to tell me about the composers who were currently

teaching: partly because I wanted to know, but mainly because it seemed that David was much more comfortable talking about composition than exchanging informal banter. We chatted for about fifteen minutes before the composition students began entering the room and we were interrupted.

In our first interview, David arrived at the coffee shop early, and prepared, bringing all of his music and scores. Although I had first judged David as shy, during this interview he was much more loquacious, and I attributed that openness to his excitement regarding composing. I found that when David discussed his music, his entire demeanor changed. No longer was he withdrawn and soft-spoken. He sat forward and spoke with such energy and exuberance that he proved difficult to understand and follow. Throughout the six interviews, as David grew more comfortable with me, his dialogues continued to lengthen. By the end of the six interviews, it became difficult for me to understand David's answers to my questions. He often got so excited about explaining something that that by the time he finished talking, the original question escaped him. David was the only participant in the study with whom I regretted his knowledge of my experiences as a composer. Perhaps because of his youth, David was very concerned about seeking my approval and whether I believed his answer was appropriate or correct. Numerous times David asked what I thought of his writing. Of course I always smiled and encouragingly told David that I liked his music and that it was well beyond his years, not just to appease him, but because it was true. One impressive note about David, although he is struggling to complete a very difficult dual degree program in composition and engineering, was that he took the time to

participate in this study. It was easy to see that David is passionate about his experiences writing music, and is willing to make tough sacrifices of his time to discuss his work and his process.

David's Narrative

Besides being a composer I'm a Lego boy: that's right Legos, like the toy. I've always been big on Legos and been extremely good at math and at the sciences. And you know the typical story: if you're good at math and science, and if you are a male, then you are going to be an engineer or a physics major. So, I just knew that this was going to be a part of me. I really don't enjoy that side of me as much as music, but it's there inside of me and I realize that I'm good at it, so I do it. So I'm getting a dual degree in engineering and music composition. I think there are a lot of links between my brain as an engineer and my brain as a composer. I mean, when I am writing music, I think of how an engineer works with a trebuchet[4]. And I think almost every problem in the world could be explained by understanding the mechanics of a trebuchet. There isn't a doubt in my mind that if I can figure out how to use a trebuchet I can better understand the universe. My mind boils everything down to mechanics, to working like the trebuchet; it's all about knowing the right tools and the right time and knowing how to put things together and how to deconstruct. In my mind there isn't any difference between my construction of the trebuchet and music: I mean, time, tools, and

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[4] A trebuchet is a mechanical device employed in the Middle Ages either to smash masonry walls or to throw projectiles over them.

construction and deconstruction. But I don't want to go too far with this; I mean, everyone talks about how we should be going nano and it's all about going smaller, but not me. I like the big stuff. I like things that are tangible, things I can put my hands onto. Like the way I place my hands on the piano, something that I can operate and manipulate physically and touch. I think that's why I like cars and things like that. I can see my impact, the difference I make. I have this dream that one day I am able to come up with a machine that can allow us to move in any way we want, completely removing us from all sense of space. You know, I think mechanical engineering has the potential ability to allow us to take our bodies and beings to another plane, another level, and finally realize our dreams of being spirit-like, a floating ethereal spirit. I don't know, perhaps music has the ability to do that for us now, and that's why I'm here, writing music. It's a place where I can dream and construct dreams that are only bound by my imagination and my ability to find a good performer.

I've had dreams like that since I was a child. You see, I would have to dream because my parents were pretty intense. By intense I mean we were the type of family that you would read about in some nightmarish Robinson Crusoe novel. We are a big family; I am the third of seven children—that's right, seven kids. We lived in a small house in the middle of absolutely nowhere. I mean this place was so far into the woods, it was difficult for the postal carriers to get mail there. We did have basic television, but my parents wouldn't let us watch it. My parents considered television programs empty calories, and they believed we should only be exposed to things that would expand our minds.

There were lot of streams and trees for me to play in as a child. I remember having fun, spending most all of the daylight hours running barefoot through the farm. I think in many ways I will always consider those carefree days some of the best of my life.

My siblings were a lot of fun to be around and we have all gone on to do pretty cool things. I've got one brother at Harvard, a sister at Yale, and my younger sibling is going to Princeton in the fall. I guess you could say we have all done pretty well for ourselves, and we are all pretty smart, I guess. I think it's because we had to read a lot—I mean there was simply nothing else to do, sitting in that damn small town.

My parents are pretty weird. Let me tell you how weird they are. My dad would get up a lot of mornings and climb up to the top of the mountain we lived on. At about 6 a.m. we could start hearing him wailing away on these huge bagpipes, and they would sound all throughout the area; I mean they were loud. The neighbors were furious. They just couldn't understand why in the world he played the bagpipes at 6 o'clock in the morning. Well, neither could we. I mean, we aren't Scottish; as a matter of fact, we are Armenian. I think this was his version of a mid-life crisis. Did I mention my parents are weird? Most men buy sports cars; my dad bought Highland bagpipes. What else is there to say? I mean, I hate to talk too bad about him; he is smart, and he has done well for himself. He is an engineer, that I know, but other than that, he doesn't really share anything about his job.

My mom, she had so many kids, I think she wanted to have a professional life but she was just overwhelmed by being a mother to us all. I don't want to take too much

away from her. She is a writer, and she has written some really beautiful prose stuff. Some of it has been published in small publishing houses, but at least she can say she is published. She enjoys hosting parties for other women writers in the area. They get together and read their stuff aloud and workshop ideas. I guess she does have her creative outlet, even though for the most part, if you were to ask her, she would just tell you that she is a homemaker.

My parents always considered themselves as musical kinds of people. Like I said, there was no television, so the emphasis was on what records were playing and what music we wanted to live our lives to. For example, in the morning we all discussed what would be good morning music, and in the afternoon we discussed the music that would set the right scene for the afternoon. Before bedtime we would often play music for each other, on the instrument of our choice. It gave each of us an opportunity to showcase what we had been working on and it was nice to have the encouragement. That was the way I learned about a lot of different music and a lot of musical styles. My mom was a pianist. She could play pretty well and she always surprised me with her ability. As for my dad, I don't know what all he played in his youth but it seemed like he could play just about any of the instruments we had around the house. Like it or not, my dad has taken up the bagpipes recently, and for my neighbors it's more "not" than "like it."

I guess you could say that my parents were extremely creative, eccentric people, and our house for most part was one big creative zoo that I was usually glad to be a part of. My parents were always interested in our creative behaviors, which is odd

considering that my dad is an engineer. But I think my parents took a lot of pride in the fact that we all played music and that we drew and sketched all the time. I think that's why he didn't want the television. I think my dad wanted to us to use our own imaginations and not rely on the media. He really wanted us to find our creative selves and for the most part I feel like we did.

I remember my parents being thrilled when I started playing the piano and banging out things. Like I said, my mom played piano and so did my siblings, so when I was quite young, 6 or 7, I would sit down with the Bastien books, you know the series for learning piano. Well, I picked them up quite easily; they were very easy for me. So I got really bored; at a pretty young age I was able to take these Bastien tunes and sorta 'diddle' with them. By diddle, I mean play or extend. I think you could say that I still diddle. You could consider almost all of my music as an extension of my kind of diddling. For an artist it's kind of like doodling so maybe that's where the word came from.

My piano teacher would get really pissed at me when I was kid. I would go in to my lessons and couldn't play the music as written. I mean I would begin by playing the music as it was on the page, but them I would go off on some sort of weird tangent, either playing off of something harmonically or melodically interesting and just, you know, diddle. There is no doubt that my love of playing at the piano, by that I mean my diddling, was equal to my love of playing literature. I love playing piano; piano is my life. I always think I had this sort of tendency to sit at the piano. I mean everyone in my family played the piano, but it was different for me, and I think everyone understood

that. It was just something I did better than everyone else. I spent hours everyday at the piano, both slogging through music on the page and diddling. I did both everyday.

I think everyone expected all through high school that I was going to be a concert pianist, and a good one. I mean, my fingers can move crazy fast, and I've always picked things up really quickly without a problem. I don't think it was until 12th grade until I really decided to be a composer instead of a pianist. I don't know, I just felt like it came down to this: I didn't want to spend six hours a day practicing to perfect music that was on the page. I didn't want to live my life in the practice room. I mean, that's just not the life that I wanted. Being creative is just too important to me.

The piano is an escape for me. I mean, given my childhood, there were definitely things I had to escape from. People could be pretty cruel—pretty mean to me and my brothers and sisters all throughout school. We were all the smart, nerdy, small-built people who were just shunned because we didn't fit in socially. So I think we all escaped away into our more intellectual or artistic pursuits. But in the end, I guess, who is laughing now? We all turned out pretty well, right? But it was hard growing up that way. I guess music allowed me to have an ego about something. It was something that I could be proud of and something I could claim as my own. I took a lot of pride in my piano music and in my diddling. I think I always have; it's always been there for me. That's why I laugh to myself whenever people ask me when it was that I decided to be composer. I don't think there ever was a time when I wasn't a composer. From the moment I sat at the piano I think I was the type of person who explored sound. I'm not

the type of guy who would ever color between the lines, so why should I ever play exactly what is written?

So in a sense, I guess you could say that I was born a composer, but I don't want to be arrogant, either. Diddling on the piano isn't composition, not real composition. Anyone can play at the piano and just play around and play shit; that's not what I mean. I don't want to confuse diddling with composing; diddling is creative. Composition is when you take that creative energy and your brain and go somewhere with it. So, that's what I'm trying to do with my teacher at the university.

I don't think my diddles really added much until I got to high school. I used to always beat my head upside the wall because I could play things at the piano, yet I couldn't get them onto paper. It was excruciating. I would spend hours on end playing the same things over and over on piano, and they were so easy to play. But to put the ideas on paper was so painful. I hated the replication; I hated it. It took me a long time to write very short musical things. In high school I could finally write things down that actually somewhat captured what I was diddling on the piano. In my junior year of high school I won a composition contest and I think it was then I started to take my writing more seriously. I think won something in 10th grade, but in 11th I won first place in the state. In my senior year I won first prize for a composition as well, and I thought that was pretty good. Then when I applied to colleges I got into most of the schools I applied to, so I felt like I was pretty prepared for success. I'm not going to delude myself; I don't know how many people were entering into these contests, or how many

composers are applying to music schools, but I did gain a lot of confidence during the period, so I guess it's important.

In high school my band director really encouraged me to write music. In my senior year I wrote a piece for the jazz band and I had a lot of fun with it. I was able to write solos for myself on the piano and as well as solos for my friends in the ensemble. Everyone really loved playing it and it made me quite popular, and I have to admit it made me pretty proud and the piece was pretty good. The piece is pretty Gershwinish and sounds virtuosic and is difficult to play, so of course I was the only person in school who could come close to playing the piano part. But I was happy to be able to share my musical abilities with my high school friends.

Even though I'm in college now, I'm still in touch with a lot of friends from high school. I am just a freshman, so I still communicate with them over email a lot. But I think I'm slowly falling out of touch with them as I get to know my college friends more and more. Of course, I had to rely on my old friends when I first arrived here because college is frightening. Not just college, but especially, for those of us in the music college. I mean you come in and immediately you are judged and compared with everyone else. It's certainly not like that in the engineering program. The freshman engineers just all come in together and do what they need to do. It's not like that in the music program; it's a completely different story. First, I am the only freshman, so there is really no one going through the same things I am going through. Second, no one seems to care that I am only a freshman—I mean, come on, I just turned 18, and I have to play my music at seminar beside the work of doctoral students. I feel like everyone is

looking at me asking, "What is he doing here? Why was he accepted?" And when I do share something that's good I can't help but feel that they wonder if I might enter a competition they are trying to win. I pretty much have only one good friend who is a composer. He is a senior, and one of the few that I feel is not judging me. He just listens and encourages me, and to be honest, I need that.

I'm finding that most of my friends here are the performers. Besides, I think they are the most important people to get to know here, anyway. They are the people who are going to make or break me in terms of what my music is going to sound like. If I have good friends who are performers, then I can get good recordings, and a good recording equals winning competitions and that's what I want to do.

All of my professors and all of the visiting composers have all won the major competitions. I realized pretty early on that if I'm going to make it, if I'm going to be big time, then I need to go ahead and win some big competitions early. I ask myself, "What are these composers doing to win these competitions? What are they doing that is considered new or fresh or innovative?" I think that's what I'm really after; I'm listening to their pieces and saying, "Yes, that does sound good and fresh," and I write that down in my journal so I can incorporate it into my next piece. Some might say that it's stealing the ideas of others, but we all borrow from everyone and everyone knows that. When you compose you have to come to grips with the fact that everyone steals from everyone. I can't stand it when someone says that their voice is completely original or their own, because there is no such thing. That doesn't happen—we all weave ideas together and borrow things.

That's not say that there isn't creativity involved in the way you construct things. If I wanted to be someone who could only write in the style of other people then I would be a music theorist. I think that's why people go into music theory—those are the people who are good at deconstructing things, but are never able to put things back together in an original way on their own.

I think my biggest problem right now as an undergraduate composer is the fact that I can't seem to get away from my piano and I can't seem to get away from the computer. A lot of people say that they don't like the music they believe is written on the computer and that the best composers are those that use pencil and paper, and that's fine. But I have to admit, I like the fact that I can write something and hear it back and hear the chord and the way the transposing works. With the computer I can make sure that everything is correct. Some composers look down at me because I readily admit I use the computer. Oh well—I think it's a great tool for writing music and I'm going to use it.

I just wish I didn't have to sit at the piano when I write. I'm so jealous of those who sit and write without a sound source. I find myself constantly going back and forth from the piano to the computer, back and forth, hours on end trying to create something. It is so painful because it's so easy for me to play but so hard for me to notate. I know that this probably makes me less of a composer. Most of the time I get frustrated and bored and eventually just find myself turning to the piano and allowing myself to get lost in my diddles.

But I guess I should be thankful for the piano, and for the outlet for my creative energies. One change I have had recently in the past month or so is to allow myself to think of stories in music, and writing music around stories that I create. That was my composition teacher's idea to get me away from just writing from my diddles. This one piece that I'm writing now is about a boat going on a journey and getting trapped in a storm. To get myself out of the rut of just sitting at the piano and writing, I'm using the stories to conjure images and musical shapes. I just want to use shapes and form and care more about bigger musical thoughts. I am finding it is really broadening my tonal vocabulary; it is forcing me to get out of the habit of writing pieces that stay in one key. I still do that, you know, and it makes me crazy. I get locked into one key and chord and find myself staying in the same rut way too long.

If there is one thing I have decided my music will not be, it will not be vapid or fluffy. My worst nightmare is that someone will call my music a new age sort of thing, a set of harmonies that just sound good. So what I'm doing now is finding something I like, then using new techniques my teacher is showing me. I manipulate the music so it sounds more mature and interesting.

That's where I find the intersection as an engineer and a composer. I've come to understand that I need to move from just diddling to constructing more musically complex vocabularies and sounds. I've promised myself though, even though I'm going to use modern techniques, that at the end of the day I want people to enjoy the music. I don't want them to hear my music and cringe, no matter how complex or mature it is.

The other really important thing is to have fun. I think that's why I like my composition teacher so much; at the end of the day he has fun with what he is doing. I think music should be fun and that I should have fun when writing. The other thing I will never let change is that I want the audience to think that my music sounds good. For me, a successful composition is one that when they leave they are able to hum the melodies and the tunes stick with them. I want my music to be something the audience can wrap their arms around, something with meat on the bone, that is not so far away that people can't understand what is going on. I think people have fun with my music and know that I am having fun. I want people to enjoy my music. That's what this is all about.

That's one thing I like about school. When I first arrived I thought they would try to push me into some weird atonal things that I didn't really like. And true, there are some composers that are writing things that are pretty out there. For the most part, my composition teacher just wants me to explore and do new things and evaluate what things I feel are important. I swear sometimes I feel like it's more of a therapy lesson than a music lesson. There are weeks on end that I will walk into the door for my composition lesson and I will be empty handed, with no new material ready. I think he knows that since I'm getting a dual degree in engineering and composition, I have little time to spare and he is very kind and understanding. I mean he doesn't have to be. But whether I bring music in and we talk about what I've written or if just listen to something and we talk, we do just that, we talk. He never forces anything on me. On the other hand I do think he has an agenda. I think he wants me to see new types of notation

and consider new tonal ideas. I don't mind. I really enjoy his time and I really like hearing his perspective about music. When he does give me assignments or when he does require me to change my music I try to be open minded and smile a lot, but as much as I hate to admit it, I really don't do well with changes. I guess in the end we all have a hard time with criticism. It's funny though, now that my music vocabulary has grown, largely because of my professor's arm twisting, when I look back at the pieces I wrote last year in high school, even the ones I thought were good, I cringe. I mean, they are pretty cheesy—how on earth could I have stayed in one key for so long and think the work was interesting?

Some days I get so frustrated composing that I wonder if I made a mistake by not majoring in piano performance. Especially when I hear the performance majors here, my heart aches with envy because they are so good. I wonder if I should be one of them or I wonder if could be one of them. I love playing the piano. I love virtuosic things and impressing people when I sit at the piano and play some spectacular Liszt etude. I miss the attention and think, "Oh, I wish I could do that." But in the end I know that I have energy inside that is greater than just replicating notes that are on a page. I think composers have more to offer the world than performers. I think separating performing and composing is kind of like separating reading from writing. For me sometimes it's hard to do. If you read enough aren't you going to overflow and need to write? That's the way I feel when I'm playing notes on a page. I feel like something builds and builds inside and it overflows and my hands just take over and go

somewhere. It's like a volcano erupting inside me and I can't take being bound by the representation of music.

I think the best part of being at school is being in a bunch of different ensembles. When you play something in an ensemble, it can't help but get inside you a little. A lot of times whenever I perform a great piece I can't help but think, "I want to write a piece just like this." That usually lasts until I sit down at the computer and try, realize I can't, and give up.

Right now I'm in chorus. We have an ensemble requirement here and since I'm a pianist that means that I have to be in chorus. It's not like I'm going to pretend like I can sing or anything. I really can't. For the most part, I think they let me because they had to. They have to put the keyboardist somewhere. I sing quietly, and that allows me to hear what is going around. I'm finding that my participation in the vocal ensemble is changing the way I perceive things. I've decided that for my next few pieces I will place vocal music into it. I want my music to sound like *Carmina Burana.* I love the vocal music. I think I like it because it's tonal; perhaps that's why vocal music suits me.

Of course, I do have this inner debate. How much will I grow if I continue to enjoy or wallow in this grossly traditional tonality? Even though there is pressure here to write a specific way, there is talk of writing something that is your own. It would be easy for me to fake being a modern minimalist. I could just sit at the piano and play the same diddle over and over again. For some people like Philip Glass that's great, but I think people would be able to see through me and realize I was just faking it. What would be worse is that I would know that I was faking it. I think you can almost feel it

in the compositional seminar. It's not something people talk about, but I think people know when they get up and present their music whether it's real or not, whether it's something they really kind of journey to or whether it's something they replicate because they want to be considered intellectual or avant-garde. I just hope people don't think that of me. I'm just trying to branch out and do something that my professor is proud of. I also don't want to embarrass myself in front of the other students at seminar. I don't want them to say, "that's not bad for a freshman." I want them really to think it's good.

I don't want to give the impression that I'm having a bad time studying composition. I really do like it here, especially being around the amazing performers. I think that's the best part. There isn't anything here my brain can come up with that the performers can't play perfectly, and that's pretty cool. That's why I work so hard to make good friends with performers. I mean they are amazing here. There is nothing better on this earth than hearing music played by someone who is exceptional. So far I've had three pieces played and they have all wildly exceeded my expectation. When the performers take charge of the music they take it to places my computer never could.

I sometimes worry that other composers don't take me as seriously because I am a double degree guy. Maybe they think I am selling out, that if I don't make it as a composer then I will be an engineer. That could not be further from the truth. My heart really rests in being a composer. I will never stop composing; I will always write even though I don't have commissions. I am hopeful that there is somebody out there who wants music written and they will consider me, and I can help them create a piece of

music they want to play. There are some of my peers who say they are going to write only for the concert stage, and they will never accept restricting commissions. But I'd gladly take commissions and write music that makes them happy. Who knows? I may go on to do graduate work and decide to write music for films. I think film music is some of the best music in the world. I love *Lord of the Rings*, sci-fi and fantasy and that kind of thing. So how fun would it be to be able to write music for them? That's what it comes down to; maybe that's why I'm drawn to the idea of writing commissions or writing for film. I think, in the end, it needs to be fun for me. I need to be having a good time while writing.

I think for now I just need to do the important things. I need to win a competition so I can get recognized by people who can open the right doors for me. After I win a couple of competitions I think I will get a few commissions so I can afford to feed myself. I'm not afraid of being poor if I get the chance to develop my craft. And then I think people in the film industry will come to me and ask me to write music for them. I think that is very feasible. In the future I will just concentrate in on making enough money to eat, and living as a full-time composer, and ideally one day, be known as an eminent composer.

Meeting Reese

When I visited the school of music to ask for participants and walked into the music composition seminar, Reese was one of the first students who caught my attention. Reese is very tall, about 6'2", thin set, and wore a long black trench coat with

black eyeliner and heavy makeup. It was obvious that Reese was the most socially active of all the other composers; before the seminar began he made a point to speak and engage everyone in light-hearted conversation. Similarly, during our six interviews, Reese was always socially engaging, exuberant, and more than willing to share his ideas and opinions.

Reese is the oldest of the four participants; he is 23, and a 5th year senior. He is a seeking a double degree in music composition and psychology. During the six interviews, it became apparent that Reese spent a lot of time thinking about psychology and human behavior. Throughout our time together, he showed a keen interest in not only answering my questions, but in dissecting the reasons why I was asking the questions. It seemed as though he were constantly questioning the agency behind the questions and what I might secretly be looking for. Reese was also the only participant who had opinions concerning the questions that I asked. Reese was very confident in both presenting his opinion and providing critique and analysis of others. Unlike the other participants, for whom I had to ask subsidiary questions in order to allow the participant to think about the topics in various ways, Reese was very thorough in his answers. He held very strong and passionate beliefs concerning his music and the music of others. He was the only participant to provide detailed criticism of his own work as well as the work of his private teacher. Through the interviews I learned that Reese considered himself a member of the theater community as well as the music community. Reese admitted that he loved participating in theater productions because he enjoyed being the center of attention. At each of my seven meetings with Reese, he

always dressed in outlandish attire, almost always wore make-up, and consistently garnered attention from the coffee shop crowd. During our conversations in the coffee shop, he often spoke quite loudly, much louder than what was needed to communicate with me, almost as if he were speaking for the benefit of the others in the coffee shop, as well. What seemed most surprising about Reese, however, was his display of confidence regarding his descriptions of his strengths as well as his weaknesses. He was often quick to describe his intelligence and facile wit, as well as his weaknesses as a performer.

Reese's Narrative

I fancy myself a jack-of-all-trades who can do everything; that is how I think of myself. I mean, I'm full of myself and I think I am unique. I mean that with my tongue firmly planted in my cheek and quite sincerely. I really am full of myself as you may have noticed; some people think of my pompousness as a put on because I am really insecure. But no, I actually am this arrogant and I'm working on it but not, seriously folks I know the difference. The difference is that I was part of the smart kid mafia and I think of myself as intelligent, again, arrogant as fuck, but that is how I think of myself. And I think I have this attitude because that's just the way society treats me; I mean it's kinda sexy to be a musician. I mean, it is. I don't know what else to say, OK, so this is like a mad psychological thing, I really don't know why it is that I feel that everyone thinks I am exceptional, I just am, I guess. I mean there aren't many great composers out there, so I guess people recognize that I am distinctive. It feels good to be someone

special and stand out; I like that. I mean my girlfriend, she is not a musician or the artsy type, and she thinks it's hot that I am a composer. I have written a couple of love songs with her in mind and it makes her feel really good. She brags about having a composer boyfriend, but that's going to stop happening when I have to start paying for things, like life.

But I'm not afraid to tell you that when it comes to performing, I'm crap. I mean, part of my interest in composing stems from my loathing of practicing. I hate practicing. I don't know, even if I could perform I still think I would be a composer. It's really not my parents' fault though; they really tried to give me the best of everything. My parents are both hard-core academics. Both have Ph.D.s from Ivy League schools and both teach in the Ivy League now, so you know it was expected that I would be brilliant, and thankfully, I am. I think my parents were surprised I wanted to be a musician; neither of them consider themselves, you know, musical. My mom can't carry a tune at all, but bizarrely her mother, my grandmother, has an amazing ear; she can repeat anything she hears on the piano. She has gotten old and she can't play like she used to, but considering she had little training, it's astonishing what she can do. My dad, he is an amateur musician, the quintessential wannabe. He would have liked to be a musician, but as it turned out, computer science was easier for him. He played double bass in college and sang in a few choirs, you know, took lessons for fun, and that's about it. I think he wished that he was better, but he simply wasn't good enough. My parents are the stereotypical northern, obnoxious, wealthy, educated liberals. I mean, I was sent to the best schools, all private schools, of course. The private schools I

attended were filled with professors' children, and it was pretty obnoxious. We were all brilliant, so the teachers didn't have to do much but just entertain us; for the most part we were all self-motivated to learn.

My parents always took my brother and me to cultural events like the symphony and the opera. It was more about attending socially appropriate events and being part of the society page than anything else. I don't know how to say this without being rude about my family, but like, you know, we were wealthy, and being seen at cultural events was just expected. That's why my parents encouraged us to play music and take lessons. I think their motivation was more socially based than anything else. I mean, everyone else's children were taking lessons, so I guess my parents encouraged us to be like our neighbors. My mom is the type that attended my lesson recitals, or the Metropolitan Opera, and falls asleep during the whole thing and doesn't really get it, or enjoy it. She just enjoys dressing up, looking the part, and being a part of the scene. You know what I mean, being seen by the people who you need to be seen by; that's what the arts are about for her. For me, I was happy to go to cultural events, especially the opera.

I was one of the youngest people to attend Princeton's camp for the gifted. They usually will not accept students until the 7th grade, but my parents got me in while I was in the 5th. So during the summers, I would attend this extreme nerd camp for the most gifted students in the country. It was pretty neat; there were always brilliant musicians around, not just the students, but the faculty and staff were usually musically inclined, as well. They also offered great music classes, theory, world music, etc; there were

always interesting musical things going on. I guess you could say that in general I had a pretty spoiled existence as a child; I think that's what made me the arrogant bastard that I am today.

You know, I have always considered myself an artist. Even back in high school, during the gifted camp, and during my ensemble experience in choir, I always thought of myself as an artist. I think that's why I was so resentful of the music teachers. I mean, it was obvious they were just there to teach and they were not real musicians themselves. Besides elementary music teacher types, I would rather learn from a teacher whose primary concern is to be an artist than someone who is just leading an ensemble. Most music teachers deal with classroom management. I think they always overlook the students who need to be nurtured and stimulated. That's why I always had to take private lessons. I took private piano lessons, but like I said earlier, I royally sucked. I hated practicing and was extremely undisciplined, and besides that, my teacher was boring. But, about my junior year of high school, I started taking composition lessons and I really enjoyed that. I finally tapped into my artistic side and I realized that I could be creative with music. It dawned on me then that I was never really creative when participating in the ensembles in school. That's when I also really got into Gilbert and Sullivan. I had been listening since I was small, but my junior year is when I really got hooked.

My decision to be a composer came around that same time, my junior year of high school, maybe right before my senior year. There were a number of factors that helped. I started singing in a great community choir and it really excited me. I

remember we did Durufle's *Requiem* and I was taking music composition courses and music theory courses. I had a lot of really cool things going on; I mean I was getting amazing instruction for a kid in high school.

At that time of my life, I really started to understand myself as an artist, who I wanted to be, and how I wanted to be heard. It was also about that time I started writing love songs. I loved writing love songs because I could utilize the words to help me express myself. I don't want to over-exaggerate my abilities; when it comes to poetry, I stink. I would probably still stink at writing poetry if I tried to write something today. You know, that's what it is all about, understanding what your strengths and weaknesses are. But anyway, in high school I was doing some writing, but it was all pedantic and vapid, nothing of any intellectual sort. It was more of extension of my theatrical and literary curiosities than any sort of momentous musical activity.

You know what is curious? I was always taking music courses all through middle and high school, but that's not where I learned to be a composer. It is ironic that I learned to be a composer from my art teacher in high school. My art teacher John Pappas was really up there in terms of his artistic sensibilities. He knew how to work, what is good and what is not, and what the creative process can be, much more so than anyone I knew back in high school. There was just a big difference in how he described creating things, which no one ever talked about in music. He focused on how to be creative. I would sit in his art class for hours and he never talked about moving a pencil to paper; he focused on bigger issues. He discussed how to understand yourself as a spirit of creativity rather than the picture you could recreate on a canvas. He focused on

how to get through the day as an artist. He didn't know anything about music, but he helped me understand myself, and to be creative and live creatively. Besides being an art teacher, Mr. Pappas was a novelist and wrote a large amount of creative literary work. I think I have more in common with writers than I do composers; perhaps that is why I got along with him so well. I feel like I have a lot more in common with people who write words for a living than I do with people who play music for a living. Playing music is something you do with others. You practice with them over and over because it is an incredibly refined, great technique that controls exactly how your fingers move, exactly how you breathe, how you stand on stage and how you perform. In composing and writing words, you sit by yourself for hours and hours on end, and that is how you do your job. Performances are great, but if you want to be a composer, you have to be able to like sitting in a room with big paper, sweat pants, and a cup of tea. That's what it is like for most of us. I think my art teacher, John, helped me come to grips with living life as an artist and understanding that reality. I mean, that doesn't happen in music. In music courses young musicians just sit in large ensembles, like big choirs; they just show up; sing their thing like trained animals. They sit down and are told, do this, and everything will be fine. They are not getting treated as someone who is creative personally and I think that's terribly important. I guess I am resentful for the way I was taught in high school; I mean what if I didn't have that art teacher? Back then, I hated practicing piano, but I would stay after school with the art teacher for two hours every day, just to be around him and hear him speak. I became fascinated by the ways in

which I could create art and how it could be translated into the ways I could write music.

I think my art teacher, John, pressed upon me the idea that I need to focus on my process of being creative rather than the product. It may seem pretty obvious, but here at school, I rarely see that kind of focus. I wish people had a more open philosophy. I watch students sweat over note after note, making circles on paper over and over again. They consider themselves so big and serious and they are trying to produce something that is way too large. They are not thinking about process at all; all that is in their head is creating a piece of music that will gain them attention or possibly win a competition. I'd say that is about as far away from creative as you can possibly get.

I'm not going to say that attention is bad; I certainly don't mind it, especially when the attention surrounds my music being performed. Some of the best experiences I've ever had are when I have won some competitions. When I was in high school I won one, and was like, hey sweet, I can do this. In college I also won a few competitions as well. I'm not going to say that I mind having people tell me how great my work is; let's face it, everyone likes to have their ego stroked every once in a while.

I am pretty lucky, I have had some really big successes here at school, and I'm really proud of them. I definitely consider myself to be one of the best composers here at school; I am definitely top-shelf. I always get the best performances from other students, and I get praise from everyone at a ridiculous level. I always get picked to do things that other composers are jealous of; I guess you could say that I get a lot of attention from others, and that attention really pays off in the end. You know what they

say about the squeaky wheel . . .When it comes down to it, I have the chops to back it up. I think that's why whenever the faculty needs something written by an undergraduate that is meaningful they always come to me.

That's partly because yes, I am mature in what I am writing, and I know what I am doing, and they know that whatever I do, it will be good. But that's also because a lot of my peers here just really stink. I mean people here are about as square as you can get, they come in and do what is expected of them, they never push any boundaries. And you know, because it is a music school, these people never think. The courses here are so ridiculous, so easy; that's why I had to do a double degree. I could feel my brain atrophy after being here one year and not taking courses outside of the school of music. I don't see how these people take it, just doing music classes over and over again. Then again, maybe that's why their brains do seem to atrophy.

If you think composers' brains atrophy, you should see performers. It's terrible here; they just lock themselves in a closet and hope that one day, they will walk out and be someone who is extraordinary, you know, the next Joshua Bell. I find that when I am around performers, or just musicians in general, I have to act less smart just to get along with them, except for the very few really smart ones. I mean, because musicians are not that smart; I'm sorry, talent and brains are not correlated. There are people who can play incredibly well, yet can barely add, and that's mean to say, but it is true. Getting the performers out of those closet practice rooms and getting them to open their minds to see new music is almost impossible. All performers want to do is recreate the Rachmaninoffs and that's about it. It is incredibly frustrating for me, especially because

I write music that stands outside the box. I mean people just don't get it, especially the performers.

Around my junior year of college I started my own contemporary performance group so I could get my music heard, much like Steve Reich. I refuse to write the shit that gets played here. It is so pedantic it makes me crazy. So, I got so frustrated with the performers and their unwillingness and bitchiness to perform anything, that I took matters in my own hands and created my own group and it has worked out really well. I've created a community of performers who are dedicated to doing new things and aren't afraid of stepping outside of the box. I think that's one of the biggest gifts I've made to this institution in my time here. I think I have opened people's minds up to doing things outside the norm. I guess in some ways, it has made me an outcast and I'm fine with that. I have always been an outcast since I was in high school, so screw them.

I guess I shouldn't be too harsh on performers, however, composers have brought a lot of misery on themselves. Because I have been here for a while I can tell the difference between when a composer's piece is crap and the performer doesn't stand a chance, or when a piece is well written and the performer hasn't properly prepared themselves. You can tell the difference when it's the composer's sloppy writing or when it's the performer's blunder. I can't tell you how painful some of my experiences here have been while listening to the new music of my peers. Often the pieces go on for 40-50 minutes and never develop and you're just stuck there listening to crap. This happens all the time and it seems as though composers here never learn.

Vocalists are the worst. They hate doing anything new, and many of them they think Sprechstimme is something new; I mean, come on. Thankfully there are a few vocalists here who are smart and open minded, and they are good about telling the others how ridiculous and stupid they are. There are ways to do just about anything in new music that are safe for your voice. All they do is walk around with bottles of water and scarves, and act like they may fall and break themselves permanently.

The thing about this school is that having an open minded compositional community is a double-edged sword. That is, the fact that composers walk around saying I love everything and anything new and the additional fact that there is hardly any critical discussion or critique and it is maddening. I guess young composers have a hard time listening to others critique their music, and that's pretty sad; it shouldn't be that way. Thankfully there are no real demands on us in terms of a specific style or voice—people here just concentrate on their own voice as opposed to anything that is particularly virtuosic or showy. I am very thankful for that; that is one of the few redeeming things about the school.

Maybe it is the stodginess of the school or whatever, but it seems like the faculty here let the composers believe the old artifact of romanticism that composers are just loner, crazy people. For some reason, that is still around today but I am doing everything I can to shake that up because you know, it is not true. There are those composers who you know that can't hold a simple conversation in polite society, but the majority are people with great social skills, great manners, have great friends, and

write good music. I mean, even though some of the faculty are socially inept, it doesn't mean they have to transfer that to their students.

The other thing that pisses me off about the culture here is that no one talks about money. We all know too well that money is what makes the world go around, yet no one seems to realize this fact. That is why some people hate Philip Glass—it's not because his music is minimalist; it's the fact that he markets himself really well and has made out with big dough. And then there are people like Steve Reich, who many like myself feel is a better composer by far, but he doesn't know how to market himself. At the end of the day, it comes down to image and marketing, and that is never taught. It seems here that people don't understand that in order to make it they have to use their brain to get out there and do something with themselves. I mean, I can think of one composer who writes the same shit over and over again, his music is vapid and awful, but you know what? He found a niche and marketed himself really well. He makes a ton of money, and I'm thinking if this complete and total sexist idiot can do it, anyone can do it; success in music has very little to do with talent.

The undergraduate experience is confusing in so many ways; the way people perceive and value things here is so bizarre and twisted. There are composers who are well respected in the academy—Ligeti comes to mind, and it's hard to find someone who really thinks he is a bad composer. You know, minimalism has this sort of off and on thing; academics never really took to it, because it's too easy to describe. I think academic music is defined by its ability to exclude people; I think it's hard to find people here who dislike Schoenberg, but it's easy to find people who don't like film

composers. I think the definition of any "appropriateness of music for the academy" is completely based on exclusion rather than inclusion. I don't think people come right out and say that very often; I think people don't have the balls to, but you know what? It's true.

I guess at the end of the day, things just don't make sense here because the music school is this enclosed space or wonderland, protected from reality. Because of that, I think private teachers have a huge impact on the way composition students think and behave. I know that my private teacher made a huge impact on me in the beginning, especially my first teacher. His approach was very off the page, very psychological, which was good. He talked a lot about the process of writing and he engaged my mind, and we fought a lot because he wasn't afraid to challenge me and I wasn't afraid to challenge him back. That was as a freshman. My second year I started studying with another teacher, and boy, did we argue. Whereas my first teacher was very philosophical, this one was very close to the notes. He was all about structure, form, and forcing me to organize my music in forms that were more traditional. With him, I would just visit once and a week and we would just hang out and talk cool stuff, which was refreshing. When I first started meeting with him, I think he had this idea that he was going to reconstruct my chops and make me a better composer. The way he was going to do that was that he insisted I write a complete sonata in the style of Haydn and a small symphony in the style of Mozart. I just looked at him and flat out said no, I mean, hell no. For some people that might be a good idea to do that kind of a thing but I would have killed myself. It would have been completely pointless for me; I don't like

cribbing[5] from other people. OK lie, I will crib from people, what I mean is that I will steal ideas that I like and incorporate them into my music. I just hate the idea of total imitation and completely copying someone else's work; it just seems pointless to me. Other people are better at writing in someone else's style than I am; I'm not so good at that. If I am writing in the style of someone else, and yes, I have tried, I feel like I am someone trying to be something that I am not.

I guess when it comes to private lessons, I should paint a more accurate picture. I don't completely disregard everything he tells me. I certainly don't mind him trying to give me some helpful hints. He has expanded my notion of modern technique and actual pen to paper stuff. He also has helped me realize the maturity that can be gained through complex variation, but that's about it. I will not go back and copy the works of Tchaikovsky. That's just bullshit. Again, for me it's the notion of process, in order to be an artist you have to understand your own way of thinking.

I think its ironic that my teacher reminds me to remain open minded and yet he can be the most obstinate son of a bitch I can think of. As a matter of fact, what he doesn't realize is that he unknowingly taught me to be completely uncompromising when it comes to my writing. He has reinforced in me the notion that I have a true artistic sensibility that I should pummel people with in everything that I do. His constant questioning of my writing has actually made me more rebellious and forthright in sticking to my own voice. That's a violent way of saying it, but that is sort of right. He and I are both perpetually uncompromising. My private teacher could have made a

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[5] Cribbing is slang for stealing or borrowing the property of others.

lot more money if he would have been able to network or been more of a commercial type of guy, but he is not. He is just pure artist, sitting in the woods creating, you know, that kind of dude. That pisses a lot of people off sometimes, but for me, it's an example of a type of thinking and writing that is admirable and can pay off. You know, he is doing pretty well, he is young and teaches at a great school. I think most of the composers here, myself included, would kill to be in his shoes.

I've been starting to hold my music to higher standards, which is good, I think. Especially since I am now doing more theater things, I am working on a chamber opera right now. It's a prolonged, sustained type of writing that flops out of me like a dead fish. Not a fresh dead fish, but one that's been dead for a couple of days; it just stinks and it pours out of me. It must be painful for my private composition teacher to work with me on it. I mean theater work takes patience; it is never right on the first time out. Theater music calls for a lot of patience, and for the most part he is not a theater type of guy, so he gives whatever little advice he can. Even though he is coaching me in a type of music he is unfamiliar with I do appreciate having his eyes and mind look over the work, I mean I have to give him his kudos, he is brilliant.

I have to be honest with you. I often ask myself, why in the world am I getting a composition degree? In the past couple of months I have been thinking that maybe I shouldn't be a composer. Then I will be writing something really fast and just be in a moment, and then I'll say what the fuck was I thinking not wanting to be a composer? I love being a composer. You know, I just have those moments I guess when reality hits, and I go back and forth between my love of music and the reality that I know is out

there. I know that as a composer, my future is pretty difficult. I have no great firm waiting to give me a six-figure salary.

The other reason I consider quitting is because my composition lessons are just so bad. Sometime we really fight and it pisses me off, and I wonder, why I do come here and do this? I don't need to be a part of this, anyway. You don't need a composition degree in order in order to compose. When it comes down to it, right now I have everything I need in order to make it. I really don't need that piece of paper with my name on it. I also don't feel as though I have to have the faculty's stamp of approval on everything I do; I realize their reality is very far afield from the real world anyway. Besides, I'm getting a dual degree anyway; thank goodness I'm not just totally relying on my music to feed myself.

It's not like I need to stay here and finish the degree because they can better prepare me for the future, that certainly is far from the truth. The school here never uses the word "future" and I think it's a real disservice to some of the younger, more clueless composers. There is no job training, no discussion of health insurance or anything else people need when they get out of here. I just don't think it is right. They should be teaching us about the business side of music. Composition can be a business; with the Internet, you no longer need a publisher. You can make it on your own if you have a little business savvy. Nowadays, all publishers do is take royalty checks; the model of business for the composer has changed, even in the past ten years. They need to teach the composers here to be ruthless self promoters and get away from the self-absorbed thing. It's a hard balance to strike, that is, being a ruthless self-promoter yet not coming

across as completely obnoxious, but it is a risk worth taking if you are going to make it. They should have composition seminars based entirely on how to get our music heard, how to network, how to publish our own music, how to make money, those sort of practical things, that's the goal of a composition seminar. How many times do we have to sit there and listen to someone blow on about their own stupid ideas? I don't think they should be teaching us to be Paul McCartney or someone like that, God knows that would be painful, but there is a balance that needs to be struck. We need to be taught to be critical, brilliant composers and at the same time they should prepare us for the business world and what it is going to be like when we get out of here.

For me, I know that it is all about theater and music so undoubtedly I'm getting to Manhattan as soon as I can. Then after graduation I will be in New York City; I cannot wait. New York is where I am most alive and is the center of the artistic world. I can't wait to go and be a part of it, and see what I can offer.

Meeting Henry

At our first interview I was not surprised when Henry described his love of sports. From his physical condition it is obvious that Henry takes pride in his athletic abilities. At 6'3", 230 lbs., it would seem he could easily play on any college football team. He is certainly taller and in much better shape than any of the composers with whom I went to school. What is peculiar about Henry is that while physically he can seem intimidating, especially given his size, dark features, and fully-grown goatee, his voice is soft-spoken and almost inaudible. Ironically, while he presents a strong

presence due to his athletic build, his carriage and vocal inflection suggest a more timid and reserved disposition.

Henry is a rising senior, 21 years old but in appearance seems much older. His hair is close-cut and at first I wondered if he were a member of the military. At all of our meetings he dressed very conservatively, always wearing khaki pants, a dress shirt properly tucked, and dress shoes and belt. Even though the weather was very warm, Henry always wore a long sleeve shirt as well as a dark sport coat.

All through our six interviews, Henry's vocal inflections and physical mannerisms rarely changed. He always spoke in a quiet voice, almost a murmur, with his head tilted down, and used small, circular hand gestures as he talked. It was surprising to me that Henry was able to talk using a constant, steady tempo, never becoming animated or exaggerated in his speech pattern. I couldn't help but think that Henry's demeanor seemed forced or practiced. As I watched him and got to know him better throughout our interviews, I would sometimes forget I was talking to a 21 year old; he seemed much older. It was obvious that Henry was very concerned about the way he presented himself to me, both in the way he dressed and the ways in which he spoke of his life. At our first meeting Henry was very open about religious views. Early in our conversation and unprompted, Henry described his devout relationship to the Christian faith. Though Henry's mannerisms seemed staid; his descriptions of his music experiences were emotional and sincere. I was often moved by his descriptions of important life experiences; though his vocal inflection never changed, his stories were poignant. Henry's interaction with me was always the same. Even though we met on

seven occasions he always carried himself the same way, never letting his guard down. He was always professional, reserved, and intellectual in the way he approached our conversation. It was obvious to me that he took himself very seriously, both in his views of himself as a composer and as a religious young man.

Henry's Narrative

I have a strong relationship with the Lord. That relationship in many ways has guided every aspect of my life. The summer before my senior year of high school I went on a mission trip. On the way back, sitting at the airport, I had an epiphany. You see, the trip was pretty brutal. On this mission trip we got on this boat and went up and down the Amazon River providing medical and dental care to poor people. While providing basic medical care we spoke to people about the importance of the Lord and accepting the Lord into their lives. So, at the airport, returning from the trip I remember sitting there crying in the airport, and I'm not the type to usually cry or get emotional. That trip just opened my eyes to the world. I mean that trip really changed my life. I realized there were so many people less fortunate than I. I think I saw humanness, and I recognized that for me, my music was the connection to my humanity. But more important than my relationship to myself and others, music helps me connect to God. I realized that there was so much poverty and sickness in the world, and I realized that I was rich, not because of my possessions, but in the gift I had in music. I knew that the Lord had given me music and that I needed to take advantage of the gift he had given me.

One of the best parts about growing up in the south is being able to take part in a community that loves the Lord. I grew up just outside of Jacksonville, Florida, and it was the best of both worlds. I lived far enough outside the city to feel safe, yet I could go into the city to participate in musical offerings. I have two younger sisters and they are both musicians as well; as a matter of fact, they are both music majors. I guess music just seems to run in the family. My dad is an amateur pianist, and my mom is a crazy good singer. She was offered a full scholarship to major in vocal performance. My grandfather on my dad's side was the principal violinist of a major symphony orchestra, so I guess you could say that music is in my blood. My parents both have a love of music but we always understood that neither wanted to make a life as a musician. My dad is a successful architect and my mom owns her own small business. For me, selfishly, I'm glad they weren't musicians, because their careers afforded my sisters and me a very comfortable childhood. I mean, if we wanted to try something there was always money for lessons or whatever else we needed.

Like I said, my dad was an amateur pianist. I sometimes think he was resentful he wasn't better. Perhaps that's why we were all required to take piano lessons; piano lessons were never an option. Every Wednesday we understood that we had piano lessons and we needed to prepare for them. We grew up in a very structured, organized household, so if my dad wanted us to take piano lessons, we took piano. And I have to admit…I mean, I would like to tell you that I really enjoyed it, and it was something that changed my life, but it wasn't. As a matter of fact it was a big drag. My dad didn't let me stop taking piano lessons until I started playing the cello, around the first year of

middle school. That's when I first began liking music. I really enjoyed playing the cello, feeling my body move with the cello. It was a totally different experience. I practiced a lot on my own and didn't mind going to lessons, so I think that's why my dad let me give up the piano.

I was able to get pretty good at the cello pretty quickly, especially compared to my peers in public school. I mean our school programs were OK, but I was always the first chair cello player. I found that in order really to have better musical experiences I needed to participate in the youth orchestra program that took place in the city. In the youth orchestra program I wasn't the best; I mean I wasn't the worst, but I found I had to work hard to sit up front.

The curious thing about the piano is that when I started cello and stopped lessons on the piano, I actually started to play the piano more on my own without any pushing. When I started taking cello and thinking about music differently, I found myself going to the piano and taking interest in it. Ironic isn't it, that when I didn't have to play, I actually began playing more. Even though I may have had access to different sorts of lessons and different types of piano playing, you know ragtime, etc., the cello just lit a fire of music for me that wasn't there before.

Also, you have to realize the importance of church in my family's life. In many ways the church opened my eyes to music. So maybe it was going to church and being part of the sacred music we sang in prayer that influenced my musical thinking. I guess around the 6th grade when I started taking cello that was also the time I began really understanding what was going on in church and taking more ownership in it. Maybe I

started asking questions about the music I was playing in church and hearing things differently. So I guess, maybe going to church and singing and all those kind of things shaped the way I view music.

I think the cello also allows some sort of social interaction that I hadn't previously known. That, plus the music, I mean string music is really romantic, and it was about that age that I began dreaming a lot and realized that I had a romantic heart. I mean, I love the music of Pachelbel and Brahms. I guess you could say I wasn't into your average pop music because I don't agree with the message that pop music sends. So I started listening to a lot of classical music, or art music, or whatever you call it. My parents bought me great music to listen to while I was doing my homework: Bach, Brahms, Dvorak, those sorts of guys. I remember hearing Brahms's *Trio op. 8* and listening to it over and over again, just wishing I could play that type of music on the cello. So I think maybe I realized that there was music out there that I loved and that the cello was a means for me to be able to play it—that and the fact that the cello was always so easy for me that I was able to get really good at it fairly quickly. Also with the cello I got to meet a lot of people; I was always in honor orchestras, community orchestras, regional orchestras, and state orchestras and I loved meeting the other cellists. I also loved the great literature that we played. In those groups we usually played the romantic basics, a lot of Tchaikovsky and Mozart.

I don't want to sound like I'm resentful of my dad making me take piano. If he hadn't, I wouldn't be a composer today. It's always been central to the creative part of music making for me. That is to say that cello is great because I like the literature and I

like the social component, but I can’t do anything creative with cello. I have a different relationship with piano. When I listen to classical music I pretty much know that if I practice a lot I will be able to play it. But with piano, I know that there is no way I can play the music I hear in recordings. I feel more of a freedom to just do my own thing on the piano, whereas with the cello I was more learning techniques and the specific. It could also be the nature of the piano versus the nature of cello. With the piano you have the notes right there in front of you, you can play one note against another and see how they sound together. But with the cello it’s more of a one-note kind of thing; every now and then maybe a chord, but it’s not as easy to see the whole picture in front of you. So for me the piano was a means of freedom and exploration whereas the cello was a means of recreating or replicating other people’s music.

I didn’t start creating music until pretty late; I was no child prodigy. It was probably eighth grade before I wrote something down in a way that was really composing and not just playing around at the piano. Of course that eighth grade piece wasn’t very good. It was just a little piece for the piano. As a matter of fact I didn’t even want to write it; I was pressured to by my parents. They wanted me to write a piece and enter it into the PTA-sponsored music competition as school. They suggested that I take a few of the musical things I had improvised on the piano and write them down to enter it into competition. I didn’t want to enter the competition because I didn’t think my improvisations were good. Furthermore, I realized as I started to try and capture it on paper that composing was time-consuming and difficult. It was such a different way of thinking. I was really miserable as I was writing it down, especially

since I'm a bit of a perfectionist and I had to make sure that it was 100% correct. So I did write it down and I did enter into the PTA contest and it won. It not only won at the school level, it also won first place at the county level, and then second place at the state level. After winning all of those awards I decided to keep writing stuff down.

As much as I enjoyed the attention I got from winning the competitions, I still didn't write a lot of music. My main thing back thing then was baseball, and my cello practice time was already draining, so I had no time at the end of the day. I just didn't have time to compose. I figured there was no real reason for me to compose except to win competitions. Until I had that Christian Mission experience when I went to South America I wasn't quite sure where my life was heading. I mean my grades were good, I loved sports, and I was great at baseball—I was on the varsity team. That summer was a big U-turn experience for me; it was then I decided to follow my love of music.

I'm not sure what it really meant to be a composer, or that I really wanted to be one until I got to college. I mean, sure, I applied to be a music composition major, but I didn't really dig in and understand what it meant to be a composer until I got here. So I guess being around the other student composers and composition faculty members really helped me understand exactly what I wanted to be and how to be a composer. Coming to school here had a huge influence on me. It was not a conscious thing; it just sort of happened and evolved, I guess—hearing other pieces and wanting to weave new things into my own voice. Because of my experiences here, it just became part of me as a composer. It's a natural progression I guess; I don't want to write what I wrote when I was a freshman. Don't get me wrong; they were good for a freshman. But I've grown

and I’m no longer the man I was at 18 so my music is going to reflect that. Just as I have grown as a person through college, I’ve grown as a musician. I think my compositions are going to reflect that; they are going to be different, more mature.

Being around a community of composers has helped me in a lot of ways. It’s the discussions that seem to help. I learn how to wrap words around things. Having friends that are composers gives me a sense of belonging. Like yesterday, after the chorus rehearsal, a circle of just composers were standing around talking and I was thinking, “How cool is this? I mean how many times in my life am I going to be surrounded by people like this?” The composition seminar is the same way, too; we get together and share ideas. At times it’s forced, but afterwards we go out for coffee and share ideas. It’s hard to explain: there is a dialogue that goes on beyond words. It’s the way we perceive things and the way we act. It’s hard to describe.

It’s not that my peers influence the way that I write because my style is my own. If anyone has had any influence on my writing style, it’s my composition teachers. My private teachers have had an enormous impact on me and my time here. I really look up to them. I listen to a piece of music one of my teachers has written and I learn a lot from them because what they teach me is usually included in their own work. Or, they point out something that they don’t utilize, their decisions about what to exclude in their work. It’s weird; they influence you, but not in ways one would think. It’s not like I ever see my composition teachers compose; it’s not like I ever see them in action or learn from their doing. As a matter of fact, the only time we only talk about things is when I bring in my work that is almost finished. It’s more like I pick up on the way

they talk and perceive and think about things; we really don't talk about process. Amusingly, I've been studying from the same composition teacher for two years and he has had such an influence on me that my peers joke that I move, talk, and think like him and that our mannerisms are completely the same. It's odd because I don't think that I compose like him. But I have to admit, I can see where he has rubbed off on me and I do catch myself saying things that I know he says. It's not a conscious thing; it's subconscious. I guess I say that teachers don't have a huge influence on us, but maybe they do, or maybe more than I realize.

My teacher is a man so we don't talk about emotional things; it's mostly technical. For me a composition lesson is about bringing a piece in and having it critiqued in certain ways: you know, in terms of orchestrating things and how the music can be better notated. For example, I've been working on overall structure and staying focused on introductory materials throughout an entire piece. I think that's something I get from my teacher's comments—taking an idea and expanding it as opposed to introducing something and moving on. The idea of development and expansion is what I've been thinking about; I think that's part of my recent musical maturation. I like my teacher because he is not forceful. I bring something in and we listen to it on the computer and he will just say, "You might want to consider cutting out all of this," and he is talking about half of the piece and what I had been working on that week. It's not like he hurts my feelings. It can just anger me because he can leave me lost. I know he is challenging me; he wants to stay with ideas longer and think of overall shape. Overall, I'm glad he does say something and that he stretches me.

Over the past year or so as a junior I can really tell I am growing more confident in my writing. I don't mean to imply that I do no revision. I revise a lot as I am constructing a work. I'm finding that I have gotten so proficient at revising my own work that my teacher really doesn't have a lot to say. To be honest, I appreciate his comments but deep down I know I don't have to go back and change anything. What is done is done; it stands as a work that is my own voice and I've grown confident in that. Once I finish a piece I'm ready to move on; I'm ready to leave. I don't need to go back and stir the pot just for intellectual curiosity. For the most part I think my teacher is OK with that. I think he sees my confidence and how I've grown as a composer and person. So I don't feel the need to add some contemporary technique to my style to fit in or make my work something that it's not.

My freshman year I won a major composition contest here at school. I think that experience planted the seed of confidence that my voice was strong enough to stand on its own, that I could be confident in my own style. I think competitions are a really good way to judge yourself. It's really encouraging. It's very encouraging whenever your peers or professors think that what you do is actually good.

My teacher realizes that I have been pretty lucky or pretty blessed. In my opinion you take music and try to expand or create something, but ultimately you either have the creativity needed to keep composing or you don't. I do not think creativity or composition can be taught. I think you either have music you need to express or not. It's one of those inexpressible things that some people have and others don't. I think it's that honest place that comes from your heart that comes through your music. You can

be a good imitator, but you either have something distinctive to say or you are just a good imitator. People don't come out and say this but some composers are just good imitators. I think they write something to get recognized or seem intelligent. I think you can see and hear the difference. Here in school the composers I respect are the ones that demonstrate a love for music.

I think there is a lot of weird stuff going on out there. I just wonder when I hear this strange music, "Does the composer really like listening to this?" While sitting in the composition seminar and hearing this contemporary music I ask myself, "Why? Why are they doing this?" For me, it sounds so bad. To be honest I don't think they love what they are doing or even understand what they are doing. I don't know, maybe they do—I think it's really vague for me, this whole thing of intellectual music. I think you have to love what you are doing. You can't just write music in a certain style because you think it's going to be accepted or it's going to be successful, or this is the way your teacher told you to do it. I think it comes from understanding yourself as a person and knowing who you are, and knowing that the truest music is that which is an extension of an honest soul.

The other thing that upsets me about some of the composers here is that they write music that is difficult because they equate difficult music to compositional ability. It's as though they think if they can write something impossibly virtuosic and complex, it somehow makes them more mature or sophisticated. But I think they do it out of ego. It gives them something to hold over the performer and makes them feel better about themselves. I can think of the perfect examples of this. My roommate, a piano

performance major, was asked to play a piece by a composer that is really contemporary. It's almost entirely serial and calls for the performer to climb into the piano to play weird tone cluster with bizarre mallets—I mean, it's absurd. For weeks on end I had to hear him complain about the music and the composer. I felt the music was intricate simply for the reason of being difficult. I think that's one of the reasons why the performers here hide from composers. Performers have realized that most of the works of composers are just intellectual bits of nonsense written for no true emotive reasons. I can understand why performers are so resentful toward composers. I can't think of one piece of new music that I've heard all year that is not incredibly demanding to play— especially for the string players. It seems that composers will write anything for string players and give almost no consideration to the complexity or difficulty.

One of the best pieces of advice my private teacher has given me is to make good friends with performers. I have worked hard to forge relationships with performers so I can get my music played well. If you get really good performers you get recordings, and nowadays, recordings are what really matter. But like I said, finding good performers who are willing to work for composers is near impossible. The damage has been done and the stereotype exists, and for good reason.

That's why I think all composers should be performance majors as well. That way, they would have a really strong understanding of where the performer is coming from, and they would be more careful about their writing. I feel like composers forget simple things like clarity of notation. I think if composers were forced to perform, they would write at a much more practical level. They ask us to take a performance class, but

most composers just end up singing in the choir—the choir accepts everyone, and it takes very little work.

Then again, I know if I had to play cello in the orchestra here it would be pretty embarrassing. I made all state orchestra and similar groups, but the players here are just crazy, over-the-top good. Maybe a while ago, it was determined that composers wouldn't be able to keep up with the performers. Besides, if I were good enough to play in the orchestra here, then I would be a performance major. I think if you are a performance degree major it's better. You can get your performance degree and if you wanted to compose, you could just compose on the side. That makes a lot more sense to me, just composing on the side instead of getting a degree in it. I wish I could be a performance major. It would be the best of both worlds; I could play in the awesome groups here and then, on the side, write what I wanted to write. But I realize I'm not that good of a performer, so for me, it's composition. I hate to say it, but in many ways perhaps my decision to be a composer came from a harsh realization that I couldn't make it as a performer. Simply stated, I don't think any of the composers here are strong performers. I don't think any of them are as good at performance, myself included.

I remember the day I decided I couldn't make it as a cellist. It was my senior year of high school, during a composition lesson. My dad came to the lesson because he wanted to be a part of the conversation. I remember my cello teacher telling me that I wasn't ready to play the literature that was required to audition at the better schools and

I was pretty upset. I knew that I was good, but I also trusted the opinion of my teacher and my father.

In the future I hope I can play piano and cello in church because that is what is important to me. I'm pretty realistic about my future. I'm getting a dual degree here in composition and recording arts. I hope that a career in composition pans out for me, but like my parents I have to plan for a life outside of music even though it's my love. I've only got one more year of school left so I'm starting to get the "What are you going to do?" questions. I just hope that I will be able to compose. I think everyone's dream is to be a composer and teach at the university level. That way I'd get to teach what I wanted—theory, history, composition—as long as I get to write, too. But I think I'd be happy doing something with recording. I am pretty open-minded. I never had the notion of a dream job that I had to have, except for when I was 5 years old and I wanted to be a garbage man.

It's not that I'm getting the recording arts degree as a "plan b." I don't think of it that way. Because of the recording degree, I think of sound differently. I think the recording degree allows me to consider music differently. In terms of a career, I don't know what I want to do. I try not to think about it; something will come along. I have faith in that.

I find that most of the composers around here never think about the future, even from the beginning. There was a recruitment day here for seniors in high school who were considering attending the school as composition majors. I remember when they visited us during the composition seminar and sat in with us. I remember the

composition teachers getting up and presenting what we do at the composition seminar every week, but I found it odd that they never talked about life after college. The professors never discussed what career plans existed or what other alumni who had graduated the program had done. What surprised me more is that no one asked. It's just something people don't talk about. It's like everyone around here has their head in the sand. It's pretty terrible for me to say that, but it's true.

I guess there is this general assumption here that when you graduate with your undergraduate degree in composition you will go on to graduate school. I think most people just accept it as a matter of course. I know I do. I'm thinking of going on and earning my doctorate.

In the past couple of months I've really come into my own as a composer and my voice has gotten stronger. This newfound confidence is really driving me. Maybe it's knowing that I have to graduate in a year. Maybe it's the positive reinforcement I'm getting from everyone around me. I feel like things are going well for my music. Everyone is positive but my parents. They attended my last recital and I told them before the music began that I had a new compositional voice and I was heading in a new direction. Well, after the concert my parents and grandparents told me they were less than pleased about my new style. I just don't think they get it. That is to say I don't think they get where I am going. When I first started writing music it was very important to me that my family like it. I guess it's because my family was the only place I could get feedback for my writing. But I can say I really don't feel the need for their approval anymore, or that it's not a strong feeling. I'm trying to think of why that

is. I think in large part it's because of coming here and attending the school of music. I think it has to do with being around professional composers and hearing complex music that they haven't been exposed to. I think also there is the physical separation too. I'm hanging out in this new musical atmosphere, and I'm only calling home every few weeks, and there is a just a growing separation. Maybe I'm just coming into my own. I think it covers all areas of my life; I'm moving away from family and home and becoming more independent and so I don't need their approval. It doesn't bother me that they no longer understand my music. I've come to the realization that I have become more educated and they don't understand my new education in music. They really don't understand me as an adult either, that I'm growing up and moving on. Don't get me wrong; they still love me. But, as I've come into my own they will understand me less, both as a musician, and who I am as a person.

I get this feeling, especially in the past couple of months, that I'm headed toward something that's much better than anything I've done before and I'm pretty excited about it. I'm pretty excited about the ways I am growing and the new paths that seem to be presenting themselves in front of me.

Closing

In this chapter the narratives have been presented without analysis or commentary. The purpose of presenting data in this chapter through a narrative design was to provide a nuanced viewpoint of each composer's background and perspective. I realize the relationships of the themes to the research questions are apparent to the

reader. However, in the next chapter, utilizing a within and cross case analysis, I arranged the topics around the research questions to clearly articulate these salient ideas. By presenting the composers' accounts in various ways, I intended to provide the reader with a richer, more meaningful, perspective into their experiences.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter provides a description and examination of undergraduate students' compositional identity by employing a within case and cross case analysis of data. The intent of the within case analysis is to present and reinforce themes that were embedded within the previously presented narratives. In Chapter 4, interview data were presented in narrative form in order to represent each participant's past, present, and future engagement in compositional activity. In this chapter, the within case and cross-case analysis allows for a succinct presentation of significant themes. In addition to rearticulating pertinent issues contained within the narratives, I relate the findings to recent research from a sociological perspective. In this way, I frame the emergent themes within a larger research perspective with the intent of providing the reader with a clear understanding of how this study fits within the current trajectory of music and sociological research.

I begin this chapter by revisiting the research questions that guide this study. The research questions are used throughout the chapter to organize both the within case and cross case analyses. As stated in Chapter 1, the central question that guides this study is— what comprises an undergraduate compositional identity? To examine the phenomenon, I formulated three subsidiary questions to focus on identity development. Each subsidiary research question was designed to help illuminate various issues participants deemed pertinent to their development as a composer. The three subsidiary questions include: 1) What do the students identify as the features that lead to their

compositional identity; 2) How do undergraduate composers describe their compositional voice or style; and 3) What do the students identify as influences on their style?

Description of Within Case Analysis

I begin the within case analysis with the first research question, 'what do the students identify as the features that lead to their compositional identity?' To organize the analysis and presentation of data, I utilized what Davidson (2002) describes as three principal factors that are highly influential in music identity development: 1) environmental factors; 2) exposure to music; and 3) role of key others. While these factors provide an appropriate scaffolding for presentation of data, some topics that emerged from the data are broad enough to cover more than one category. Therefore, I ask the reader to consider the categories as an organizational structure rather than inflexible, mutually exclusive divisions.

Next, I attend to the second research question, 'how do undergraduate composers describe their compositional voice or style?' Unlike a performance identity, a compositional identity is heavily influenced by the need to find one's own voice and create a distinctive style. This question highlights many technical considerations composers may feel important in their work.

Lastly, I address the third research question, what do the students identify as influences on their style? This question illuminates how composers view their own writing and provides insight into the role of outside influences on their creative

development. This question not only speaks to issues of compositional decision making, it helps the reader understand the way an undergraduate views himself within the larger context of the musical academy and the field of music as a whole.

To clearly articulate how the research questions guide this study, I provide the questions as subheadings within the framework of each case. The research questions have been altered to include the participant's name in reference to each research question. An introduction to the cross case analysis will be presented later in the chapter.

Maureen

What Does Maureen Identify As The Features That Lead To An Undergraduate Compositional Identity?

Environmental Factors

In Maureen's case the setting in which she grew up bounded her musical environment and the social interaction she had with others. Maureen often referred to her experiences growing up in rural Maine and the difficulties and isolation associated with feeling misunderstood by her peers. Although Maureen had few peers who showed interest in cultural activities, her parents were very supportive of her musical and artistic inclinations. I asked Maureen to elaborate on her experiences in a rural setting, and the role of her parents' support.

> My mother insisted I take piano lessons and that I practice, but I considered this a form of encouragement rather than just force. When I told her that I wanted to

> try the saxophone, she got a saxophone and got me lessons. When I asked for theory lessons instead of the saxophone, she was supportive. (Interview, March 3, 2007)

While growing up in a rural town limited Maureen's cultural activities, she often referred to experiences visiting art galleries, concerts, and other cultural events throughout the U.S.

From a very early age Maureen had access to a piano. Her grandmother bequeathed a grand piano to Maureen's mother and it was tuned and maintained by Maureen's parents. When Maureen began to demonstrate a serious interest in taking piano lessons her parents replaced the older, worn piano with a new grand piano. This is one example that exemplifies the accommodating environment that surrounded Maureen during her childhood.

Although neither of Maureen's parents considered themselves artistically inclined, they were both well educated and held graduate degrees in the sciences. They provided a home environment that was academically nurturing and encouraging. Maureen's parents did not consider themselves musicians, but they supported Maureen's musical interest and lamented that they themselves did not have the opportunity to learn music. Maureen stated that her parents' lack of knowledge concerning music never diminished their appreciation of her musical efforts. Borthwick and Davidson (2002) state that "although it is common for parents who played instruments themselves to provide technical support, others who could not play made no less an impact on musical development through their desire to encourage others to

gain musically where they had missed out" (p. 76). Maureen's story helps further this notion, as her parents were not trained musically, their curiosities concerning music helped cultivate her musical interests.

Borthwick and Davidson also propose that a child's musical environment is largely shaped by parents' motivation to provide entrée to an artistic culture they themselves were not exposed to, or denied. Maureen stated that her parents showed interest in her musical activities to fulfill their own need to participate and learn music vicariously through her experience. In Maureen's case, her parents provided access to music to not only educate their daughter, but to further their own understanding of music.

Borthwick and Davidson's conclusion that a positive musical environment trumps a parent's procedural knowledge of music has implications for composers like Maureen, and music education in general. The myth that music is a gift or ability only available to a gifted few pervades Western cultures and is often lamented by advocates of music education (Reimer, 2003). However, musicians like Maureen support the notion that music is not a talent that is genetic or inherent to certain families— any child, offered a nurturing and supportive music environment, is capable of engaging musically at a proficient level.

Although Maureen clearly articulated that her parents were supportive in our early interviews, in a later interview, she admitted there was some tension in her home life when she announced her decision to major in music.

> I think maybe in some ways my parents were disappointed, as were many people, including my teachers; I think many people were hoping I would go into law or medicine, or maybe go into politics and do something that was more intellectual. (Interview, April 11, 2007)

In general, Maureen's parents were very supportive, but underneath, she felt a current of disappointment that she chose to pursue music as a career. To appease her parents, Maureen agreed to consider jobs outside of the music field when she graduates.

In summary, Maureen's childhood environment was filled with opportunities for musical and artistic exposure. She attended good schools, had access to both instruments and lessons at an early age, and visited numerous cultural events. Although Maureen's parents were not able to provide specific musical coaching, they were able to provide an environment that celebrated and encouraged musical study. While Maureen's parents are currently supportive of her decision to major in composition, they are wary of the vocational limitations of a composition degree.

Exposure to Music

In Maureen's case her exposure to music involved progressing through a number of instruments. Maureen's first musical experiences with music began in second grade when she started playing piano. In the 4th grade she began playing trombone, and a few years later began saxophone. Maureen states:

> I started trombone in school, so yes, I was in elementary school band and I

> took lessons with my elementary school general music teacher. I didn't study with an actual trombonist because there wasn't one in our area. For a while, that was my thing. That's what I was doing; I was playing the trombone and loving it. (Interview, March 3, 2007)

Although Maureen did not study privately with an accomplished trombonist, she was obviously adept as a performer. Throughout her entire high school career, she participated in both all-regional band festivals as well as the very competitive all-state band.

Maureen can describe and pinpoint an exact experience that was formative in her relationship to music and composition. Just before Maureen's senior year, she attended a music camp in the Midwest for gifted high school performers and composers.

> It was during this time I heard Berio's *Sinfonia* and Ligeti's *Atmospheres* and I was totally dumbstruck. And I think nothing I had ever played up to that point ever really resonated with me. After hearing the music at camp, someone asked me what it made me think of, and I said it was like it was like a dark cloud, and like things reaching out of it and there was the first time I was able to articulate visual images about my writing. (Interview, March 16, 2007)

For Maureen the experience of hearing Berio and Ligeti was transformative. It changed both the way she perceived modern and contemporary music and the way she connected to the visual images, or soundscapes, in her head. She states:

> Soundscape for me is when I talk about the place I go to create. It is like a 3-D canvas in which I can play and imagine shadowy images; it's hard to describe really; it is a lot of things connected to it. (Interview, March 3, 2007)

The exposure to this level of musical discourse at camp changed her perception of the culture of music and the way she could connect to it. What is also noteworthy about this transformative musical experience is that it involved music listening rather than performing. This aligns with Reimer's (2003) assertion that music listening is an effective means of constructing musical meaning, serving as one of the seven forms of musical intelligences (p. 225).

Maureen's powerful musical experience hearing Berio and Ligeti is also important because it changed the way she viewed her abilities as a musician. Gardner (1983) proposed that young musicians often encounter dramatic events or "crystallizing experiences" that forward students' musical precocity. These crystallizing experiences are a useful means for understanding how young musicians first identify themselves as gifted. This is certainly the case for Maureen, as her camp experience not only changed the way she perceived music as a craft, it solidified her understanding of her own abilities as a young composer. Although Gardner states that gifted professional musicians commonly describe crystallizing experiences, it is only one of the many ways musical ability can manifest itself. The role of crystallizing experiences will be further addressed in the cross case analysis provided at the end of the chapter.

Maureen's choice of primary instruments is also significant. By choosing trombone and saxophone she received exposure to both brass and woodwind literature

in high school. Furthermore, her experiences playing piano and guitar allowed her to explore concepts of harmony and chordal structures that an instrumentalist who reads only one staff may overlook.

> I have always loved chords and learning to place melodies against different backdrops. I love the way music theory shapes things and that is why I could never give up the piano. (Interview, April 6, 2007)

Maureen's experiences playing piano and guitar led her to question issues of theory and musical craft, to look beyond the scope of 'single staff' playing and consider broader, vertical musical structures. In Maureen's junior and senior year of high school she chose to forgo lessons on the saxophone in order to take lessons in music theory and further her understanding of harmony. This is one example of her purposefully choosing to broaden her musical perspective and hone her compositional craft rather than pursue performance based goals. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) contends that people who achieve success within a specific field often demonstrate an innate inquisitiveness. This curiosity encourages high achievers to look beyond imitation and seek knowledge that deepens their overall understanding of their domain. Maureen's innate curiosity led her to seek out a global understanding of music that was key to her development as a composer. Her inquisitiveness helped fuel her desire to look beyond playing the trombone or saxophone and understand music beyond the scope of a single line player. Maureen's motivation to not only perform music, but also understand its mechanical underpinnings was evident in her formative compositional development in high school; this motivation or drive continues currently in her undergraduate study.

Role of Key Others

One of most influential persons in Maureen's life regarding her musical development was her elementary school general music teacher, Mrs. Rivers. Besides being Maureen's teacher in elementary school, she continued to tutor her in piano, trombone, saxophone, and guitar through her middle school and high school years. Additionally, Mrs. Rivers taught Maureen music theory lessons to help answer questions about the role and functions of harmony in music. When I asked Maureen why she didn't take lessons in composing, but instead, took lessons in theory, she stated:

> Because my teacher was not a composer and didn't feel comfortable composing. And I really didn't understand how learning to compose worked back then. She was very skittish about the idea of teaching me how to compose; she felt that should give me the fundamentals of harmony, but that I had to do the rest. She certainly didn't view herself as someone who could either compose or teach someone how to do it. (Interview, March 3, 2007)

Fortunately for Maureen, Mrs. Rivers had a sense of the harmonic skills needed to broaden Maureen's musical understanding. This relationship and experience had an obvious impact on the way Maureen views the role of a composer. Mrs. Rivers, who played the largest role in her development in music, was hesitant about teaching composition because she believed that in order to teach composition, one must *be* a composer. It is noteworthy that the music teacher helped Maureen build relevant knowledge, but also communicated a hesitancy, fear, and reluctance to call what they

were doing *composition.* Although Mrs. Rivers shaped Maureen's musical education during her high school years, she never encouraged music as a vocation. Maureen's own decision to be a composer, to pursue writing music, stemmed from her experiences at the music camp she attended after her junior year. Both her exposure to dynamic and powerful contemporary music and her revelation concerning her ability to musically graph the visual images in her head provided the impetus to consider composition as a major and a vocation. It was during this time that she realized that composition was not for the elite or gifted as her private teacher had insinuated, but that she, too, had the ability to compose.

Role of Teachers in College

In Maureen's undergraduate study her perception of herself as a performer was greatly influenced by her experiences taking private lessons:

> I was studying trombone in college and my teacher Mr. Simmons was hard on me. It was certainly hard being a girl and playing trombone, I had a guy teacher. I could tell he looked at me and thought "Oh God, hopeless." So, I learned to hate trombone because I had a terrible year studying with this teacher who wouldn't let me play any literature. He made me play scales for an entire year. So, in looking back, I was like, I really don't want to do trombone auditions in this school. (Interview, March 3, 2006)

Maureen's experience with her trombone teacher had a profound influence on her view of herself as a performer. When I ask Maureen how she feels about performing now and if she enjoys performing she stated:

> No, not at all, I am terrified. Terrified of performing. I enjoy playing piano by myself, but back when I played trombone—back in the day—it was disastrous. I'm not one of those types that like, gets in front of people and shows off what I've been working on. That's not for me, and it doesn't work. I get terrified. A couple weeks ago, during a piano class, you know (it's a semiprivate kind of thing), we all get together at the end and play for each other. Even though it was only for seven people, I was terrified, so, I'm not a performer, no. (Interview, March 3, 2007)

Maureen's experience taking trombone lessons as a freshman shaped both her experiences as a performer and a musician. It is interesting to note that Maureen has such reservation about performing, when given her general demeanor, she is a forward and outgoing person. Additionally, Maureen's negative experience playing the trombone did not influence or tarnish her positive experience with music. As a matter of fact it had the opposite effect; it strengthened her resolve to write and to focus her energies into composing rather than performing music.

Even though Maureen's experiences with her trombone teacher were negative, her experiences with her composition teachers were both positive and powerful. She describes her first year of study with a composer as being personally and intellectually enlightening and challenging. During her first year, she was accepted into the studio of

a very prominent composer at the university. Maureen was aware that the teacher was more concerned with her ability to reason and think broadly rather than just write notes. At first, she was confused by the abstract thinking and instruction that occurred in her composition lessons.

> He was very musical. And I'd bring in a something like a sketch at the beginning of the lesson, and by the end of the lesson, he would be talking about how the universe was expanding. So he was very much into these type of abstract conversations, and wrapping back around into things. . . that you need to do in your music; just as the universe expands, he explained, so too, does your music. (Interview, March 10, 2007).

For Maureen, this abstract approach to composition, coupled with her teacher's ability to listen and let her talk, inspired confidence. It wasn't until Maureen's sophomore year that she began discussing more utilitarian aspects of composition like notation methods in her lessons. She found that her experience with her composition teacher guided her in ways of thinking, not just in music instruction. He influenced her work habits by encouraging her to compose a few bars everyday in order to promote balance and reduce stress in her life. Maureen's experience with the composition teacher was formative because she expressed her feelings without being valued or judged. The goal of her lessons was not written music; the goal of the lesson was to help foster her own voice and explore ways to think about music. Maureen found that her composition teacher cared more about her abilities as a creative thinker than her output as a composer. Davidson (1997, 2002) categorizes teachers as "key others" because they

provide support to young musicians as they develop their craft. Nash (1957) states that composition lessons provide an important apprenticeship opportunity that allows student composers to extend their technique in experimental ways. For undergraduate composers, composition teachers play a vital role in shaping feelings and attitudes toward the field of music.

How Does Maureen Describe Her Compositional Voice?

Maureen is assertively seeking a style that is her own. She has recently begun using extensive rests as a compositional tool.

> I'm starting to write really quiet music, just lots of silent places and small gestures and you know, very few notes on a page and I feel very strongly about it. The music means a lot to me, which is a good feeling. (Interview, April 5, 2007)

She has found that utilizing extensive silence in her work allows the actual notes to take on a delicate, sonic effectiveness. What she values most in the new form of expression is the heightened sense of individuality it provides.

For Maureen, developing a distinctive, individualized voice is the principal objective of her undergraduate composition experience. Nash (1957) states that composers are often overwhelmed by the pressure to be an "arch-innovator" (p. 81), or write in a style that is original. Whereas in some cultures, composers who follow traditions are high regarded for their ability to maintain musical traditions, composers in the West are often pressured to develop their own non-conformist voice. However,

there are limitations to composers' creative freedom. Nash (1961) and Csikszentmihalyi (1996) state that a constricting framework of cultural tradition and expectation tempers radical musical innovations. Those composers who are successful are able to operate within the boundaries of precedent and write music that is only slightly divergent from the norm. Those composers who create music that is radically divergent from what is considered the custom are shunned, misunderstood, and overlooked. Maureen, like all composers, is challenged with the task of developing a compositional voice that is distinctive, yet lies within a cultural framework that allows for approval and recognition. For undergraduate composers, the college years provides the opportunity to explore and push the boundaries of their musical voice and find the borders of precedent that they must live within to be successful.

Maureen's composition goals include expressivity, individuality, and eccentricity. When I asked her how she considers herself musically she answered: "Nothing. Nobody ever classifies me as anything. I mean, obviously there are elements of lots of things. You could say I use some colorism, some spectralism and I don't know, I don't know, I'm nothing in particular" (Interview, April 5, 2007). Maureen is struggling not only define her own compositional style, but to situate her compositional voice within the milieu of acceptable undergraduate art music.

What Does Maureen Identify As Influences On Her Style?

Maureen's compositional voice and musical decision-making are tied directly to her early experiences growing up in rural Maine. As a child, Maureen felt the pressures

of having to conform in order to succeed academically, athletically, and socially. Maureen admits that the pressures of conformity are still evident in the way she views herself and her writing.

> I grew up in a small town in rural Maine and it's kind of a difficult place to be there in high school; there are small social niches and you sort of have to figure out how to fit into one of those and that's how it seemed to me all the time. It was like that especially because I've sort of grown up always being the best of everything. It was like I have to do this and I have to do this, and so I try to get away from that attitude in music, saying that I have to, I have to, I have to—I don't have to do anything I don't want to do. So that's the sort of attitude that I've been taking and trying. (Interview, April 5, 2007)

On numerous occasions throughout our interviews, Maureen referred to the idea of freeing herself and her work. Maureen faces a constant struggle to recognize issues in her life that are restraining and confining. During her undergraduate experience she is learning to question how social dynamics control her personal and creative perspectives.

> I hope that I can continue to have some freedom and not be afraid to do whatever it is that I need to. I hope that I don't lose track of what it is that I'm trying to do. It's just ideas, get these sounds that are in my head out and I hope that I won't ever lose touch with that. I hope that I never become too academic; like the fact that I'm not working with any process except my own thought process. (Interview, April 5, 2007)

Maureen is sensitive to the pressures of being too ‘academic’ or utilizing modern compositional processes like her peers. She struggles to maintain a balance between the influences of significant others she respects and from whom she seeks praise and her innate drive to write and create in a style that is individualistic and expressive.

In college, the influences of Maureen’s musical surroundings on her compositional voice were limited for two reasons. First, Maureen performed in very few college ensembles; therefore she did not expand her musical vocabulary through performance. Second, Maureen focused on developing her own musical style and resisted imitating the styles of others, even when encouraged by her composition instructor. Maureen concedes that hearing the music of her fellow composition majors has some influence on her writing, but she made a conscious effort to avoid imitating their work. Due to the limited scope of this study I was unable to ascertain to what degree her music differed from her peers or that of her composition teacher. What is of note, however, is that Maureen does not feel obligated or pressured to conform to a particular style.

David

What Does David Identify As The Features That Led To An Undergraduate Compositional Identity?

Environmental Factors

David’s home life was filled with culturally engaging activities that played an important role in his musical development. David referred to his childhood as an

environment where creativity was not just promoted, it was engaged in by every member of the family.

> We lived in a tiny wooden house on top of a mountain, just lots of trees and not much to do. So my brother played the bass, and my sister played keyboards, and my other brother played flute and piano. We all found things to do, found things to play, we always had fun playing together, whether music or whatever. (Interview, March 10, 2007)

David was raised in a family that emphasized the arts and de-emphasized the media and its possible influence on their home environment. His parents didn't allow David or his siblings to watch television because they believed it wasn't stimulating intellectually and did not foster imaginative play. In numerous research articles (Howe, 1990, 1996, 1997; Sloboda, Davidson, Howe, & Moore, 1996; Sloboda & Howe, 1991) researchers found that high achieving musicians almost always come from supportive family environments where musical play is promoted. Howe (1990) states "no cases were identified of individuals reaching very high musical standards without substantial early support and encouragement" (1990, p. 435). David's case is no exception; he states that his home life was encouraging because his parents modeled habits of intellectual and artistic pursuits. "My father is an engineer, but even in his late 50's he is still exploring new musical pursuits that are eclectic and strange. My mother writes creative prose and often hosts women's parties in order to create a community of supportive writers" (Interview, March 10, 2007).

In this culturally rich environment, David received constant encouragement to explore his interest in music. At the age of seven, David began playing songs of the Bastien method series. David's father found it curious that when he played the songs he would take chords or melodies and extend them. David's father called this musical play 'diddling,' a term David still uses to describe his improvisatory play at the piano. David's parents, who were both amateur pianists, were amused by his ability to end melodies and create his own harmonies. David states, "what was great about my parents is that they encouraged all of us to color outside the lines, whether art or music, my parents are hippy non-conformists and it rubbed off" (Interview, March 10, 2007). David was raised in a home where divergent and creative activities were highly valued and appreciated.

David states that his parents rarely prodded or persuaded him to engage in any particular hobby; he was always encouraged to follow his own passions. This openness extended to David's vocational choices, as his parents always insisted he find a field of study that was personally satisfying. "The choice to double major is entirely my own, I think. I am exploring two things I love, mechanical engineering and music. The engineering part comes from my dad, and the writing from my mom" (Interview, March 10, 2007). David's parents provided a supportive environment that not only fostered creative activities; they provided examples of professional lives that were engaging artistically and intellectually. Their strong influence is evident in David's choice to pursue a double degree that highlights his interests in math and music.

Exposure to Music

From an early age David was exposed to various forms of music. He describes two central venues for his early exposure: 1) musical games his family played; and 2) literature he learned while taking piano lessons. David states, “we would take turns playing music and as a family decide what music was most appropriate for the time of day, or mood, or season we were in; it was kind of like a game” (Interview, March 10, 2007). These musical games not only extended David’s knowledge of musical works, the social actions surrounding the games shaped his opinions concerning various musical genres. “My dad had an really weird collection of albums, we listened to a lot of popular music and jazz which we all grew to like. I still listen to a lot of it and find some of it in my diddles” (Interview, March 15, 2007). For David there is an obvious connection between the music he was exposed to during his childhood and his compositional voice. He readily admits to utilizing rhythmic and melodic ideas he heard from listening to his father’s record collection. “It’s not that I try to copy things or something like that. I just start by playing a song that I remember and then it kind of becomes my style” (Interview, March 15, 2007).

As described in Chapter 2, Harbison (1986) calls upon composers to draw upon all forms of music they were exposed as young people, even if it is “non art” (p. 76). Composers like David are writing in a manner that Harbison advocated for in the 1980’s. Harbison calls for composers to admit that much of their musical exposure during their important adolescent development included popular and jazz idioms. Consequently, composers should be free to call upon popular and jazz traditions in their

musical craft and not concern themselves with the way their music may be considered by the academy. Harbison (1986) states that composers should no longer be afraid of writing music that is "low art" in order to gain the admiration of their peers. He suggests that young composers should incorporate all musical styles in order to develop their true musical voice. He writes:

> We are all quickly imprisoned by our own labels, if we don't make immediate creative and polemical efforts to be free. Whatever our supposed allegiances, we need to give leadership on the principles of open listening. One of our most strenuous and generous tasks is to hear value whenever present. (p. 204)

In David's case he sees tremendous value in calling upon popular and jazz styles within his compositions. Because of David's honest and open disclosure of musical influences, his exposure to popular and jazz forms is readily apparent in his compositional process and product. Interestingly, although Harbison feared that composers would be looked down upon if they disclosed how popular music influenced their work, David never discussed any negative feedback from teachers or peers from peers concerning his use of popular styles. Quite the opposite, David states that after presenting his work at the weekly composition seminar he received significant praise. I do wish to clarify however, that David's label of popular and jazz music is misleading. I found that David often referred or labeled any music that he was listening to that was not traditional art music as popular. Furthermore, his jazz interests included artists like John Coltrane whose virtuosic pianistic styles could easily blur with modern, academic compositional

techniques. In summary, even David's popular and jazz influences were musical works that were highly structured and musically complex.

Besides the musical games David participated in with his family, his musical exposure was also largely shaped by his experiences learning the piano. David began playing the piano at age seven and soon after began private lessons. He states, "I can move my fingers fast, I pick things up quickly, and you know what I mean, I can play the hard pieces, some of them quite well, especially for my age, back then" (Interview, March 15, 2007). He describes with tremendous detail his love of the piano and piano literature and emphasizes that in many ways, playing the piano was both a blessing and a curse.

> It was a blessing because I found so much pleasure in playing the piano, but I also found it a curse because the instrument encouraged my habit of diddling rather than perfecting a piece and making it as perfect as possible. (Interview, March 15, 2007).

In college, David's love-hate relationship with the piano continues. He described the loathing he felt whenever he entered his private teacher's studio for a lesson. David took piano lessons, even though not required, because of his love of the literature and excitement he feels when playing virtuosic music.

> I just like it too much. I don't so much dread it, I'll work all week and practice two times a day, and I'll get there and she will notice I'm doing something fundamentally wrong and I'll work on that and it's grueling. It is not that I dread, dread is not right, I know I like piano, and I know that I have learned

> more, and gotten much better in the first years of my college year than I have in the past four years previous. (Interview, March, 15, 2007)

David's compositional process is directly linked to his ability to 'diddle' at the piano. In order to advance his ability to improvise or diddle he knows he must advance his technique through piano study. He states, "one day I hope to remove myself from the piano, but for now I know that my work is tied to my hands; it makes me crazy, I have to run back and forth between the piano and computer" (Interview, March 15, 2007). David often spoke of frustration, knowing that his ability to improvise at the piano was directly correlated to his pianistic abilities, and that in order for his compositional craft to mature he needed to expose himself to more virtuosic piano literature. Because David writes from the piano, his exposure to sophisticated piano literature is directly related to his products as a composer. As stated above, David is aware that his connection to the piano is a weakness in his writing. McAdams (2004) found that neophyte composers often start at a sound source like a piano when composing, but more experienced composers are able to audiate or imagine sounds without the help of a piano. McAdams suggests that writing music away from a sound source expands composers' musical palettes and allows for a mature compositional craft. In David's case, he is aware of the limitations that surround his use of the piano when writing and is working with his private teacher to free himself from the use of the piano as a sound source.

Because David is a freshman, the majority of the musical exposures he described were those from his adolescence. The musical games his family played and his experiences playing piano were influential in his musical development.

Furthermore, because of his uninhibited disclosure of musical influences, it is easy to recognize how these music experiences have shaped his compositional processes and products.

Role of Key Others

While David received unwavering encouragement from his family, his experiences with peers in school were not as positive. He states that his experiences in middle and high school were negative because peers did not value math or music as he did. David described his experiences being picked on throughout his elementary, middle, and high school years at length. David explains that his environment at home fostered artistic and academic achievements yet left him unprepared to handle the pressures of school where sports and other achievements were more valued by his peers. “Being smart gets you nowhere you in school. Being small is the most brutal thing; the middle and high school years are the most socially brutal years for anybody” (Interview, March 25, 2007). David describes a disconnect between a home life where performing music was emphasized and celebrated and his relationships with peers who demonstrated little interest in musical pursuits. “Many of my friends never really knew that I spent a ton of ton of time with music; I didn’t bother telling them” (March 25, 2007).

For David, the undergraduate experience was the first time he was surrounded by peers who share his dedication for music. He describes how having friends who are composers and musicians has influenced both his writing style and his ensemble

choices. Additionally, he realizes that in order to obtain good recordings of his works he must develop alliances and friendships with performance faculty members and student performers.

> I‘ve made a good friend, a marimba player. He has taught me to realize there are things I can do for piano quite easily that cannot be done on the marimba. I mean, I wrote a piece for him and he got really mad at me, so he took me into the percussion studio and showed me, and said look, watch my hands, see—you just can't do this. (Interview, March 25, 2007)

In David's case, the experience of being around musicians who can demonstrate and communicate their knowledge has had a significant impact on the way he thinks of music. He is learning to entertain functional considerations and realizing that in order to achieve solid performances, his music must be welcomed and approachable by performers. Chickering and Reisser (1993) suggested undergraduate students place tremendous value on the opinions of their peers. Undergraduates often value feedback and critique they receive from their peers over the comments provided by faculty or other figures of authority. For David, his college peers are not only a means of sharing and learning knowledge; they influence his perception of himself as a composer.

During David's middle and high school years his private piano teachers often scorned him for his creative diddling at the piano. The teachers felt it took time away from practicing the piano music as written. But at college, David's composition teachers encouraged his use of creative extension and encouraged him to seek out

repertoire to extend and abstract. David explains that a composition lesson for him is complex, meaningful, and something he looks forward to every week.

> Our lessons are interesting. They are very difficult to describe, I mean to tell someone what it is like. Because there isn't very much to say. Sometimes we listen to pieces and talk about them, and like look at individual techniques. My teacher is great, he geeks out when we listen too much. He shouts excitedly, look at what he is doing there, which is great. And I said, that I worried that I would be put into the atonal box, but when I came here its not true at all, they are open to just about anything. He will tell me, I remember one lesson, he said David, this sounds new age, and I said, damn, and that was really bad. And he will tell me when something is like definitely, usually, not interesting, but lots of time he will tell when something is interesting and that is encouraging and I want to write a lot more. But good or bad, I bring music in just to hear him. (Interview, March 25, 2007)

Perhaps because of David's youth, and his inexperience with composing in a academic setting, he often speaks of his need for approval from peers and composition teachers. Consequently, peers and teachers have shaped David's notions about traits of successful composers.

> A lot of the best composers here get dual bachelor's degrees. The ones you hear about at least, the ones who are teaching me now, they all got dual degrees in composition and performance and got a master's in composition and piano. They are good composers; they are also great players, they're both. I'm

> minoring in piano, so at least I will be learning how to perform. It seems here that to be taken seriously you have to walk the walk on a instrument and I think my piano chops will be a good thing. (Interview, March, 10, 2007)

In review, David has decided that in order to obtain the same success as his composition teachers and to gain the respect of his peers, he needs to perform proficiently at the piano, write music that is acceptable to a wide audience, and win important competitions. He strongly values the opinion of his peers and teachers and carefully observes their actions and opinions to determine his best course of action for establishing his own success as a composer.

How Does David Describe His Compositional Voice?

Because David is a freshman, he is more concerned with developing a mature composition process and style than finding an original voice. David is the only freshman in the composition program and feels insecure about presenting his work at the composition seminar. He states:

> I realized at the first meeting that I would have to play my music in front of everyone, including doctoral students, and it was scary as hell. So, at my first few composition lessons my teacher and I decided to rework some of the stuff I had written in high school. It was excruciatingly painful to have him go through my work; I couldn't believe how long I could stay in one chord. What is pretty cool is that my teacher works on extending my technique in small ways; I am rewriting my old music but in better ways. (Interview, March 25, 2007)

David is aware that his harmonic vocabulary is not as advanced as his peers. He is also aware of the reasons for his narrow use of vertical movement. He states:

> My teacher knows that I write at the piano; I still have these ingrained chordal structures that I move to when I am diddling. I mean it is not I-V-I, but it is pretty close, sometimes its I-I-I-I-V-I, and it makes my teacher insane mad. That's why he is trying to get me away from the piano. (Interview, March 25, 2007)

When interviewing David I found it difficult for him to discuss his compositional voice without noting his process or influences. He is motivated by the need for acceptance from his teacher and peers to adapt extended compositional technique in his writing quickly—that is paramount for him in his development. However, he did mention one fear about his rapidly evolving compositional voice.

> I just hope that no one even listens to my music and they wonder why I wrote it. I mean no matter how far advanced my music becomes I want them to walk away humming. I mean I really want them to take something away from the concert. One of the best moments I ever had was after the last composition seminar when I heard someone whistling a melody I wrote. I thought, aha, success. (Interview, March 25, 2007)

Although David is very eager to learn new ways of expressing himself musically, it is interesting that he isn't ready to completely alter his style. There are some things he values and wishes to hold on to. It is also of note that David's first assignments in

composition lessons concerned advanced his understanding of vertical space, or harmony, in his work.

What Does David Identify As Influences On His Style?

David has several factors in his life that influence his compositional practices. The most influential and most obvious factor is his transition into college life. For the first time in David's life he is surrounded by peers who share a passion for writing music. Additionally, for the first time David is studying with a composer whom he sees as a mentor and role model. David states:

> I thought I was a composer before I started college, but I was clueless. The composers here are really, really, good and I have to work to keep up. I have a great composition teacher. He is really nice, and I have some great friends in the program. My friend Chris has really helped me out and taken me under his wing; he is someone I can go to and he will honestly tell me what he thinks of my writing. (Interview, March 10, 2007)

Because David was raised in a rural town, he was not exposed to peers and teachers who identified themselves as composers. Chickering and Reisler (1993) state that for many undergraduates, their first year of college life is meaningful because of the constant exposure to new academic and cultural perspectives. Without the guidance of their parents or previous peer groups, undergraduates independently decide how they care to define or label themselves. For David, being around a community of people who

all identify as composers significantly influenced the way David views himself. He states:

> I guess I never thought of what a composer was or really cared until I got here. I think the composers here are a pretty nerdy group, but I'm pretty nerdy so I fit right it; I love it here. I can geek out as much as I want and I don't have to care. As a matter of fact, most people care but in a good way. (Interview, March 10, 2007)

Lastly, as stated in the previous section, David's compositional style is directly related to his piano abilities. His composition teacher has encouraged David to write away from the piano in order to write in a more idiomatic style for other instruments. When I asked David if there were any other reasons for writing away from the piano he added, "well, I could write much faster if I just sat at the piano" (Interview, March 10, 2007). It was interesting that David mentioned that he struggled writing away from the piano but could not explain why, or how, he could improve.

In summary, David's concern for developing a heightened compositional craft is a priority. This includes expanding his use of extended compositional techniques and writing idiomatically for a broad range of instruments. His peers and his teachers heavily influence his compositional style, and concerns about individualism were not apparent.

Reese

What does Reese identify as the features that lead to an undergraduate compositional identity?

Environmental Factors

In Reese's case, his experiences growing up in an affluent New England college town greatly shaped his development as a musician. Reese often referred to the cultural and academic opportunities available to him because of his close proximity to campus. Reese was surrounded by people who were intellectually curious, both parents were professors at the local university, and his friends were children of professors. I asked Reese to elaborate on his experiences growing up close to a college campus, and the role of supportive peers.

> I grew up in a wealthy, New England town surrounded by kids whose parents taught at the university. I attended the local private school where teachers just helped guide us in our learning. We were all motivated so the teachers had it pretty easy. Looking back I took for granted how great it was to have friends who were so gifted, and our opportunities to be around people who were at the top of their game. (Interview, February 28, 2007)

Because Reese had access to musical, theater, and art events in school and at the neighboring university, he was exposed to sophisticated discourses beyond that of a typical high school student. He states:

> In high school my friends and I spent more time on the college campus than we did at high school, we were allowed to take college courses, and of course we

> enjoyed being around the older students. We were obnoxious pseudo-intellectual types who completely lacked manners, with intention, and rebelled against following stagnant linguistic practices. (Interview, February 28, 2007)

Reese's environment was exceptional because he was not only exposed to various genres of the arts, he was surrounded by peers who encouraged his participation in them. In this way, he was not only a spectator in artistic activities, he was encouraged to actively participate in music, art, and theater. Reese states, "for me I can't separate the art forms, or I don't want to. I love drama and I love being an actor, it is a part of me, but I also love art and I think painting helps me compose. It all blurs together" (Interview, March 3, 2007). Reese does not consider himself a bystander or spectator of the arts. Because Reese's peers, parents, and teachers encouraged active participation, he thinks of himself as an actor, painter, poet, and musician.

Reese is an only child and was raised in an affluent household. Both parents were amateur musicians and both insisted that he take piano lessons at an early age. In Reese's case, social pressures from his family influenced his musical choices. He states:

> I grew up in a family where learning to play an instrument is expected, I mean it is a sign of culture. I knew that my parents loved to brag about my musical successes and the fact that I was composing music, you know. It gave my parents a way say "my child is smarter than yours." I knew my composing made my parents proud and I enjoyed the attention. I think that is why I composed. (Interview, April 3, 2007)

Both of Reese's parents hold doctoral degrees in the sciences and teach at an Ivy League school. They provided a home environment that was academically and culturally nourishing. Furthermore, they enrolled Reese in one of the most elite private schools in the country that provided challenging academic work, as well as excellent training in the arts. Reese's parents were major contributors to a major opera company and attended performances regularly.

> We got dressed up and went to the opera in the city. It wasn't because my mother liked opera; as a matter of fact, she hated it. So did my dad, he would fall asleep during all of the productions. I think I was the only one who enjoyed it. My parents were there for the before and after parties; they wanted to be seen with the right crowd. (Interview, March 14, 2007).

Reese was raised in an environment where art music was seen as a means of demonstrating social status. Reese knew at an early age that his parents' interest in art music was contrived, and resented their attending opera for non-musical reasons. He states, "I think it came as a shock to my parents when I started taking an interest in opera and began to know more about the performances" (March 14, 2007). Borthwick and Davidson (2002) state that young people will often reject the musical tastes of their parents as a means of rebellion and individualization. In developing a musical identity, young people will often reject the values of their parents by classifying themselves with a musical genre that is disliked by their family. In Reese's case, his rebellion was not towards rock styles that typically represent rebellious youth behavior (Dibbon, 2002). Instead, he rebelled by identifying with opera, the musical genre that he knew his

parents disliked. Reese's early identification with opera was powerful; his identification with opera is still evident in his identity as a composer. When composing, Reese often thinks of operatic settings and enjoys working with librettos. Additionally, one of Reese's career goals is to work for an opera company as an acting coach.

Lastly, Reese's parents viewed musical participation as more of an intellectual or social outlet than a means of demonstrating emotion. Similarly, when Reese describes his writing process, his focus is academic rather than expressive:

> For me writing music is like doing a crossword puzzle, in many ways it is just a calculated measure of vertical and harmonic space. Many times when I am writing I feel like I am completing a proof in math. Sometimes we pretend music is emotional, but really with some simple formulas, it is pretty easy to figure stuff out. That's why I have stopped writing at the piano, I don't need to. (Interview, March 12, 2007)

His academic approach was also noted when I asked him about writing from a sound source. He noted that notes were just details, that in the grand scheme music was about shapes, not sounds. "When I write, I take dramatic texts and use those words— the power of the words to drive the score. I have gotten away from feeling that I have to compose music that is right or correct" (Interview, March 12, 2007).

In summary, two features largely shaped Reese's environmental influences. The first is Reese's experience growing up in a small New England college town that afforded numerous cultural and academic opportunities. Secondly, Reese's parents provided a nurturing environment that included a supportive view of the arts. Their

viewpoints and perspectives concerning music influenced the way Reese views his role as a composer and the styles of music he identifies with.

Exposure to Music

In Reese's case much of his exposure to music can be attributed to his participation in the theater. Reese states:

> When I was in elementary school I auditioned for all the kid's roles for the college productions. Usually I was in roles that just included me singing in choruses, I mean I never had the big parts, but I was hooked. From then on I was in every production they would let me be in. (Interview, March 26, 2007)

From his first experiences singing in community theater, Reese states that his musical abilities as a performer were weak. This negative perception of himself as an inept performer continued through high school and continues currently. He states:

> Let me get one thing clear— I know I am not a performer; I never have been. I can't sing or play for shit. When I was young, I could get parts in plays or musicals because I was cute, but I knew then I had to rely on the charm. In high school I was in choir because if you were a male, the chorus teacher cherished you. She was just happy to have guys around, regardless if we could sing. One of the reasons I chose this school of music is because there is no performance requirement for composition majors. I mean, we have to be in something so most of us are in chorus, and the chorus here, they accept everyone. (Interview, March 23, 2007)

Although Reese adamantly states that he is not a talented performer, he enjoys performing in venues outside of academe. Throughout his high school career and in college Reese participated in atypical performance groups. Because these groups typically include dialogue and skits into their routines, Reese views his participation as more theatrical than musical. "I have always loved being the center of attention and making up my own ensembles to do something really edgy. For the most part I am the only composer around here who even tries to push the limits" (Interview, March 23, 2007).

For Reese there was a definitive moment when he realized he wanted to compose music. It occurred at a summer camp he attended every summer beginning in fifth grade. He states:

> I attended a summer camp for the gifted eight weeks during the summer; it was all the brightest nerds from across the country. I mean all of these kids were scary little geniuses. We had amazing teachers and I remember being in a class where we could do anything creative we wanted. When it was my turn, I just did some improv or something. I was half singing, half speaking, which I still do a lot of, and the teachers went nuts, they loved it. (Interview, March 22, 2007)

The experience of incorporating his love of theater and music was transformative. For the first time he realized how his interest in theater and drama could be used as a catalyst when creating music. Reese states:

> It's funny, a lot about me has changed but I have always loved the intersections between drama and music. As a kid and even now, I have tried to get away from

> it, and my teachers have tried to push me away from it, but I always seem to come back. The other day I helped coach an opera etude and I remember feeling like I was on cloud nine. It was an amazing high. (Interview, March 22, 2007)

As stated in Maureen's case, Gardner proposes that young musicians often encounter dramatic events or crystallizing experiences. I question if Reese's crystallizing experience that influenced his interest in music and drama occurred during his frequent operatic events, or during his summer camps. Perhaps the combination of both experiences occurring at a very formative age is responsible for Reese's interest in music and drama. Gardner (1983) also states that crystallizing experiences are powerful because they manifest themselves through a musician's life in meaningful ways. This is certainly the case for Reese, as his interest in music and drama not only shapes his compositional processes, it also influences his current career aspirations.

Lastly, Reese's musical exposure in high school is of note, not because of the musical training he received, but because of his description of the experience. He states:

> Chorus in high school was painful; I hated it. I felt like I was Pavlov's dog. On the other hand I'm sure if I were to go back in time and view myself as I was back then I would hate myself, I was such a know-it-all little shit. I was always in trouble and trying to stir the pot; it was the only way I could keep from going insane. I really feel badly for that teacher. (Interview, April 3, 2007)

Runco and Bahleda (1986) state "creative students are often viewed as 'difficult,' but these seemingly difficult tendencies may be functionally tied to creative behavior" (p. 239). Furthermore, Getzel and Smilansky (1983) suggests that creative children are

typically less easy to manage than children who are as creative, the resulting inappropriate behaviors are often a source of frustration. Nickerson (1993) states that teachers are responsible for providing students with outlets for creativity in order to prevent inappropriate or disruptive behaviors. For Reese, his high school choir was a source of consternation due to his teacher's focus on performance-based practices. Because the music class was rigidly structured, both in terms of the music they performed and classroom behavior, Reese's creative inclinations were interpreted as misconduct. "I was never mean about anything, I just wanted to add dance or maybe sing a rap song or do something. Singing madrigals all day is ridiculous… My teacher and I were like oil and water" (Interview, April 3, 2007).

Reese's negative experience in high school choir still informs his current attitude toward music education. He states:

> I have often thought of becoming a music teacher because I want to go back and give students the things I never had. I mean, I'm sorry, getting behind a piano and banging notes and training kids to perform ridiculous shit that none of them care about it is not music education, it's the farthest thing from it. Being in chorus taught me nothing about being a musician, if anything it just pissed me off and turned me off to music. If it weren't for my art teacher, I would have never known how to be a composer (Interview, April 3, 2007).

Reese's fervent belief that music should be an outlet for individualized expression as opposed to standard performance practice is evident. For Reese, the value of music doesn't lie in performance, it exists in students' divergent musical gestures and

behaviors. This value or belief is a strong component of Reese's identity as a musician and a composer.

Role of Key Others

Although Reese considers his performance skill inadequate, he received excellent private instruction on numerous instruments from an early age. Beginning in grade school, he began piano study with a local piano teacher on the faculty of the local university. In middle school he began taking voice lessons as well as acting lessons from a well-established professor of music theater. In high school he began composition lessons instead of piano instruction. His composition teacher, Mr. Lee, encouraged Reese to write music but Reese was dissatisfied with his instructional practices. He states:

> I knew Mr. Lee was trying to look out for me and teach some of the basic technique stuff, but I hated it. I don't think composers have to learn to write in the style of Bach in order to be successful as a composer. It is a love-hate relationship I had with Mr. Lee; I knew he wanted the best for me but I resented that he never really let loose and write the crazy music I wanted to do. (Interview with Reese, April 3, 2007)

Reese's struggles with Mr. Lee concerning the need to incorporate theatrical components in his writing continued in college with his teacher Dr. Crabtree. He states:

> In college I've had the same composition teacher for a while, Dr. Crabtree. At first he thought he was going to get all of the dramatic stuff out of my writing;

> he hates the use of text in music. We had some really contentious moments, but in the end I was like look, I'm paying a ton of money to go here for you to help me become the composer I want to become, and this is what I want to write. He still makes me get out of my comfort zone and think of counterpoints I wouldn't have thought of; I'm not completely opposed to him making suggestions. I think we have both come around a bit and we both respect each other a lot more now. (Interview, April 3, 2007).

Mr. Lee and Dr. Crabtree played significant and similar roles in Reese's development as a composer. Though Reese was always reluctant to imitate the styles of other composers, he was always appreciative of their encouragement to expand upon his compositional technique.

One of the most influential persons in Reese's life regarding his development as a composer was John Pappas. Besides being his art teacher in high school, Mr. Pappas was a dedicated mentor who Reese considered a close supporter. He states:

> I didn't learn how to be composer from any of my music classes; ironically I learned to be a musician from being in art in high school. I had this amazing teacher, Mr. Pappas, who completely changed the way I perceived things. Because of him I learned about the process side of art, not just the end result. He taught us how to think like artists and live like artists; everyone wanted to be in his class. I knew the whole time I was in there that my art sucked, and Mr. Pappas knew it too, but I was translating what I was learning into my work as a composer. Whenever I go home I always have lunch with Mr. Pappas. He is an

> absolute inspiration to me. He paints what he wants to paint and lives as he wants to live; he is brilliant. (Interview, April 2, 2007).

Fortunately for Reese, Mr. Pappas provided an outlet for Reese's creative inclinations at a time he was frustrated by his musical experiences in choir. Additionally, Mr. Pappas provided Reese with opportunities for choice and discovery he was not receiving in his music classes. Reese states, "Mr. Pappas worked with you to create things. It was like he was life coach and a teacher. He made everyone successful. Even our mistakes were celebrated; he was that kind of guy" (Interview, April 2, 2007).

Finke, Ward and Smith (1992) state that one of the most important aspects of academic instruction is the need for discovery in an educational environment that promotes creative thinking. Furthermore, they suggest that the gratification student's feel when they discover or create something is crucial to reinforcing creative behaviors.

How Does Reese Describe His Compositional Voice?

In Reese's case, his passion for theater heavily influences his compositional voice.

> Everything I write in some way or another is based on the theater. Almost all of my work includes spoken text, mostly drawn from my own poetry or Shakespearean text. If I don't include text in their work you can almost guarantee that the rhythms in the piece were derived from words. When I write I always think of the story that drives the piece. (Interview, April 3, 2007)

For Reese, storytelling or expressing emotion is paramount in his work. Much of Reese's current work could be considered performance art rather than musical composition.

> I love to push the boundaries here and no one else does. At my last concert the performers had to read scripts and at the end they had to kick over their stands and act insane. I mean this is passé in most schools, but here people acted like it was radical. (Interview, April 3, 2007)

In Reese's case, he utilizes theatrical devices in his musical work to differentiate himself from others. He enjoys the attention his receives when his work is performed and often chooses to take part in the work by acting as the narrator.

Reese's compositional approach is analytical and he prides himself on his intellectual approach to writing. His process begins by finding text he wants to utilize in a work then drawing architectural-like schematics to organize the work. For Reese, the form and structure of work, combined with his use of text, is more important than the actual pitches in the work. He explains:

> I used to sit at the piano and worry about chords and harmony, but I have given up on that. I just think of overall lines going up or down. If the piece is dissonant, it's dissonant. It's pretty amazing how well things turn out when I started letting go. It drives Dr. Crabtree crazy because he knows I have no idea what it is going to sound like until the performance. I think he hates to say it, but my approach works better than he would like to admit. (Interview, April 3, 2007)

For Reese, the pitches he uses in his work are inconsequential. What is paramount is the use of theatrical devices that facilitates meaning for him, and he hopes, his audience.

What Does Reese Identify As Influences On His Style?

One of the largest influences on Reese's style is his composition teacher, Dr. Crabtree. Although Reese is reluctant for his teacher to dictate his choice of musical decisions, Dr. Crabtree has significantly influenced aspects of his practice. Reese states:

> Five years ago, I had no earthly idea what I was doing and I wrote everything at the piano. Dr. Crabtree was pretty adamant that I get away from the piano and try some advanced techniques. I think he got more than he bargained for; I don't think I've worried about pitches since then. (Interview, April 3, 2007)

For Reese extended techniques that require a structured, academic and formulaic approach were a welcome method. Because Reese does not consider himself a performer and doesn't enjoy playing musical instruments, compositional methods that allow him to write away from sound sources were embraced.

In addition to Dr. Crabtree, Reese credits much of the influence on his writing to his peers that are performers. He elaborates:

> There is something to be said for understanding how musicians think which is why I spend a lot of time with performers. I think that is the best way I can learn what they want to perform and what kind of things turn them on. I think its crucial for composers to get know the musicians that are performing their work.

> I try to workshop my pieces like playwrights workshop their plays. It is a theater thing but it is really effective for me. (Interview, April 3, 2007)

Again, Reese's experience with theater shapes his compositional processes. He views the performers in the same way playwrights view actors when developing new plays. Reese considers the performers as active and valid participants in his compositional process. In this way, Reese is very open to sharing in the creative process when he writes and enjoys the collaborative aspect when creating music as a group. In summary, Reese's compositional style is closely tied to his association with acting and the theater.

Henry

What Does Henry Identify As The Features That Lead To An Undergraduate Compositional Identity?

Environmental Factors

In Henry's case, his musical development was enriched by a supportive home and church life. Both of Henry's parents are musicians; his father plays the piano and sings, and his mother received a minor in college in vocal performance. The family regularly attends professional music concerts and holds season passes to a local symphony orchestra and theatre company.

> My dad would always take us to the symphony. I can't remember any piece that stands out. He took us to see piano concertos and I remember always being amazed at the pianist and how they could move their fingers so fast. I remember going to the instrument petting zoo at the symphony where you can try out the

> instruments; we went a number of times. Before sixth grade I remember wanting to play the viola because I liked it from the petting zoo, but in the end I chose differently. (Interview, March 2, 2007)

Henry states that his parents enjoyed attending a variety of arts events and believed in taking advantage of the cultural opportunities available in the city. His parents were very supportive of Henry's interests and hobbies, including sports and music. "My dad was glad I played cello, but he was also proud of me for being good at baseball. I think whatever my sisters and I did, my parents helped us" (Interview, March 2, 2007).

Although Henry described a close and obedient relationship with his parents, he is also forging a new, more independent identity as he enters his latter undergraduate years. Henry described how when he first began composing he was concerned with gaining the approval of his parents. They were the ones who provided the most feedback and encouragement when he began notating music. Recently, in the past few months, Henry is growing more confident in his abilities as an composer.

> At first it was important to me what my parents thought. I guess that's because I just started out and they encouraged me to do it and they were the only place where I could find feedback as well. But I can say that I don't have that need to have their approval, or it's not as strong, I guess. I'm trying to think of why that is. I think it has to do with going to the music school; it has something to do with studying with composers and hearing music they haven't before. Also, just that physical separation; you know I only call home every few days or week, so it's a separation. Moving from family to life to being more independent…I don't

> know, I think that has caused me to not need their approval (Interview, March 2, 2007)

Henry's family has very traditional ideas concerning proper music and the way in which Henry should write. Therefore, any divergence from extremely traditional melodic and harmonic forms is met with disapproval. However, as Henry mentions, he is growing increasingly confident and independent in valuing his maturing compositional practices.

Exposure to Music

In Henry's case, growing up in a church environment heavily influenced his early musical experiences and still continues to shape his identity as a composer. His family frequented church services 3-4 nights a week. Many of the services involved music.

> I hadn't really thought about it until now, or at least thought of it this way, but when I grew up I was always singing. I was always singing in church choirs, so singing was a large part of my musical background. I think it has a role in my music, too. (Interview, March 2, 2007)

For Henry, composing is a means of communicating his beliefs and ideas. He struggles with music that is serial or dissonant stating, "music should be written to serve God, and show the beauty that he has given us; there is some nonsense writing that takes place here" (March 2, 2007). Writing music serves a purpose greater than winning competitions or self-expression, it is a means of demonstrating his faith. Because Henry was raised in an environment where music serves a specific purpose, to serve God, his

compositional goals differ from those of his more secular peers. While he remains open to developing innovative musical styles, he knows that his music is written for Christian audiences to gather and worship. “When I think of why I write, I think of composers like Bach often, and his devotion and passion for writing for the church. I think you hear God’s love through his lines. Even as a kid, I think that’s why I loved the Bach cello suites” (Interview, March 16, 2007).

Although Henry never referenced his parents as overbearing, he mentioned that there were expectations for him and his siblings. Everyone in Henry’s family was expected to participate in music:

> Just like myself, my dad forced my siblings to take piano lessons and I guess because we were taking piano lessons, we all felt forced to learn another instrument when we reached sixth grade. I loved the piano, but when I started the cello it was like music really became real to me. (Interview, March 2, 2007)

Although Henry described his early musical experiences at being “forced,” he later described his gratitude for the exposure to piano lessons. He and his sisters benefited musically from their early experiences playing the piano due to the focus on note reading and chordal study. “I loved playing music with my family. My older sisters were really good musicians and I had to practice to be able to play the music they wanted to play” (March 16, 2007). Dunn and Kendrick (1982) found that young people whose home environments included older siblings were more likely to quickly advance in early musical study. For David, his motivation to improve on the cello was spurred on by his motivation to play duets with his older siblings. In this way, his siblings

provided a home environment that encouraged and fostered daily practice and performance. Furthermore, when Henry began to show interest in composing, his siblings encouraged his creativity. “A lot of things I wrote when I started were for my sisters and me to play. It was really about the fun of playing together. It was nothing too serious; it was fun” (March 16, 2007).

Because of Henry’s religious beliefs, and his opposition to themes held in popular music, he focused on listening to art music in his middle school years. Specifically, he described his excitement over hearing the Bach cello suites and being given a recording played by Yo Yo Ma. “I have always loved good music, the oldies but goodies” (March 2, 2007).

Henry’s preference for classical music seems obvious due to his frequent exposure to classical music and his religiously conservative household. However, several researchers contend that a young person’s choice of musical listening is influenced by several sociological variables. For example, Roe (1985, 1987) suggests that musical taste is not related to the home environment, but it correlates instead to students’ academic success. Roe suggests that students who are successful academically usually develop an interest in non-controversial mainstream music, including classical. Conversely, students who struggle academically “move instead toward socially disapproved and oppositional music and at the same time orient themselves more fully to school peer groups” (1987, p. 227). In Henry’s case, his religious upbringing, peer groups, and academic success all fostered his desire to study classical styles.

Henry participated in orchestra programs in his public school, honor and regional orchestras, as well as all state and youth orchestra programs. By the time Henry began musical study at college he had been exposed to a large amount of orchestral literature. Although Henry found the cello to be a primary instrument for musical enjoyment, he noted that the piano was his outlet for creating and composing music.

> I was listening to recordings of cello music and I knew if I practiced I could play it. Whereas piano music, I knew there was no way I could play the music that was out there; I wasn't good enough. So, for some reason I felt more freedom to do my own thing at the piano, whereas with the cello I was more trying to learn techniques and the literature…it could also be just the nature of the piano versus the nature of the cello. With the piano you have all the notes right there in front of you. You know you can play the one note and play those, and see how they sound together. With the cello it's more of a one-note kind of a thing. (Interview, March 2, 2007)

For Henry, his exposure to orchestral music and piano music were highly influential in his development as a musician and a composer. Although Henry describes his participation in a number of performance ensembles, he states that he truly didn't feel like a composer until he arrived at college. The university experience was largely influential in Henry's solidifying a compositional identity.

> I guess it's foolish to say that, or consider myself a composer during high school. It's a bit foolish because I wasn't growing so much, I mean in terms of

> feeling like I am a composer. This school is the reason why I feel like a composer. This is where composition felt natural—and before that I had never taken a composition lesson and that's pretty huge and that influenced me a lot. To get critiqued about what I was writing, that's probably the biggest thing about coming to school. It just opened up a whole world, that had never or would have ever opened up unless I had come here and seen new repertoire and learning different techniques in composition, all those things (Interview, March 16, 2007)

Both the experience of being around professional composers, having their critical feedback, as well as exposure to new music literature, were significant in shaping Henry's perception of himself as a composer. It wasn't until Henry was surrounded by young people who self-identified themselves as composers that he began using the label. Davidson (2002) suggests that performers learn more than just technical skills from being around other virtuosic musicians, they share a sense of community and provide a supportive network for one another. When performers of like instruments gather together they often define themselves with behavioral stereotypes and behaviors. Similarly, for Henry, and the community of composers in the school of music, their social interactions provides a sense of community that helps define themselves as composer.

> I learn a lot from being around the other composers. When I hear them talk it helps me learn to communicate what I am trying to say. Even though we write in different styles and for different reasons we still respect each other for the most

> part. We are all here to learn and I think we have to support each other. I mean as composers we all need good performances and we are all trying to get better and we are trying to do, and it's pretty trying on all of us. (Interview, March 12, 2007).

Role of Key Others

Henry's current composition teacher, Mr. Adams, has greatly influenced his views as a composer. Henry states that when he started composition lessons most of the discussion concerned technical considerations of orchestration or voicing. However, after several years, their relationship evolved and they now talk about much more than music. Henry now feels that Mr. Adams is more of a coach than a mentor; their lessons are more collaborative than they are instructive. "Now when I go into lessons I don't feel like I have something to prove; it's just me being me and him being him. I feel he is on my side and wants me to be successful" (March 29, 2007). Mr. Adams has not only influenced Henry's compositional process, Henry describes how his teacher has tremendous influence on the way he carries himself.

> Many people make fun of me because I talk and act like my teacher, and I guess I do. We do have the same vocal inflections and we move our head and arms the same, so I guess he has had more of an impact on me than I know. (Interview, March 29, 2007)

Carbon (1986) suggests that composition instruction at the undergraduate level is an experience that involves complex social dynamics between the instructor and the

student. Furthermore, because of the personal and expressive nature of the experience, teachers should encourage students to discuss their feelings and their role in the creative process. Carbon states that teachers should guide their students to understand and control how their personal feelings influence their writing. In Henry's case, his relationship with Mr. Adams is significant. Henry mirrors more than compositional processes from Mr. Adams. In very nuanced ways he is emulating both physical mannerisms and philosophical viewpoints. Henry states, "after seeing everyone at least once or twice a week for three years straight they are going to have an influence on you, I guess" (March 29, 2007).

In addition to his composition teacher, Henry's peers have shaped his identity as a composer and a performer.

> When I got to school and heard my friends playing, man, I was like, I shouldn't call myself a performer anymore, I really should call myself a composer. Mainly became I'm afraid that someone might hear me play on the cello and the piano and think less of me. I mean my friends here are just in another league. (Interview, March 29, 2007)

Because of the high level of virtuosic performance that surrounded Henry in college, Henry no longer considers himself a legitimate performer. He often lamented his choice to major in composition instead of performance.

> For me, finding composition was finding my nook. In many ways my decision to be a composer grew out of my inadequacies as a performer. (Interview, March 29, 2007)

In Henry's case the label of composition provides a means avoiding the pressures to demonstrate or prove musical proficiency to his peers. By defining himself as a composer he feels exempt from the competitive performance pressures his peers face during their undergraduate years. He asserts, "performers here are really good, and never good enough. I wish I could play like them but I would not want their lives; the composers are much nicer to each other than the performers" (March 29, 2007).

Many of the watershed moments in Henry's compositional development were a result of encouragement from others. This is especially evident in the way he described winning competitions as an 8th grader and as a freshman in college. For Henry, winning competitions is an important means of validation; it helps confirm his own voice as a composer and his decision to major in composition.

> I guess the most proud moments I have had in composition was winning some pretty big competitions. In eighth grade my parents encouraged me to enter a contest that was through my school. I didn't think I would stand a chance. But what was amazing is that I did win. I won first place in the school, then the district, and the state. I couldn't believe it, so I guess it was then that I really thought that I could write. Then, it was the same thing in college, there is a prize they give here to the undergraduate they believe has written the most successful piece for the year. I didn't think I would stand a chance but Mr. Adams encouraged me, and I turned in some cello pieces at the last minute. Since winning I think I have decided to go to grad school. (Interview, March 29, 2007)

Although Henry was raised in a family that valued music for its religious purposes, he still found tremendous affirmation by receiving validation from others and winning competitions. The role of competition on each of the participants in the study will be presented in the cross case analysis.

How Does Henry Describe His Compositional Voice?

Henry describes his compositional voice as tonal and neo-romantic. Although he has recently begun exploring some extended techniques in his writing, he composes in very conservative tonal traditions: He states:

> You know, I forget who it was, I think it was Dvorak who said there were many great symphonies left to be written in C major. I feel like I can say a lot using tonal devices. I really don't feel like I have to go to the edge in order to say what I have to say. (Interview, March 12, 2007)

Henry is more concerned with the overall message and purpose of his writing than in developing a unique or distinctive writing style. Henry is aware that his compositional voice is much different from his peers. He states:

> At first it was painful for me to go to the composition seminar, I just didn't understand the whole serial thing. Then I think in my second year I let go and just tried to appreciate what people were doing from an intellectual point of view. I know that some of them frown at my stuff because I'm so in the box, but no one is ever mean about it. I think we respect our differences. This year I seem

> to be getting a lot more compliments from everyone. (Interview, March 10, 2007)

Henry's writing style is traditional and tonal, and in general he avoids extended modernist techniques. He is concerned about the maturity of his writing and is exploring ways of utilizing counterpoint in his writing instead of melody and accompaniment.

> I think my writing is maturing because I am studying Bach and learning species counterpoint. There is a more complex interplay between voices and the sonorities that come to play as a result are providing a real sophistication. (Interview, March 10, 2007)

Henry is not focused on expanding his compositional voice to include current trends in academic writing. However, he is concerned with developing a craft that demonstrates his skills as a sophisticated composer and orchestrator.

What Does Henry Identify as Influences On His Style?

Because Henry's motivation for composing is primarily religious, his compositional style aligns with what is appropriate for current religious services. Additionally, because Henry does not value music that is written as an academic or intellectual exercise, his peers and mentors have limited influence on his writing. For Henry, the purpose of writing music is to help himself, and others, engage in religious worship. Therefore, the experiences that shape most composers' styles during their undergraduate study are less influential for Henry.

> I think Mr. Adams was upset with me freshman year. I mean it must have been pretty hard for him because I was insistent that I remain tonal and write Christian music. He has had some impact on me. I mean I have budged a little and we have both really come to appreciate John Tavener. Overall, he knows that my music is for my faith and he respects that which I'm glad of. (Interview, March 10, 2007)

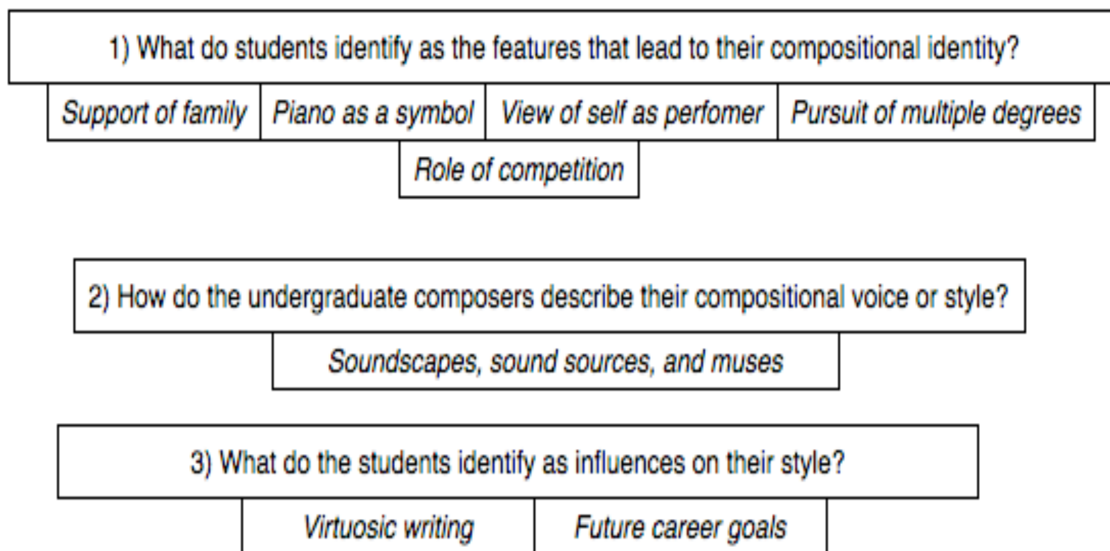
In Henry's case there was some dissonance between his description of his writing as tonal and conservative and recent comments made by his parents. Henry states that after a recent concert of his work his parents were not pleased with the direction of his music remarking that it was "odd and weird at times" (Interview, March 10, 2007). However, Henry defended his new pieces stating that his family was unaware and ignorant of new sounds and various forms of writing that were part of the academy. Although Henry states that his music is still tonal and conservative, he may be influenced by the extended techniques employed by his peers and mentors

Cross-Case Analysis

Miles and Huberman (1994) state that cross-case analysis facilitates a deeper understanding of themes that emerge from examining single cases. To present and organize the cross case analysis, I group prominent themes with the research questions they help illuminate (see figure 5.1). The research questions and the correlating cross-case themes are presented in order beginning with the first question, *what do the students identify as the features that lead to their compositional identity*?

Eight salient themes emerged from the cross-case analysis and address features described in the composers' development. The themes include: 1) support of family; 2) piano as a symbol; 3) view of self as a performer; 4) pursuit of multiple degrees; 5) role of competition; 6) soundscapes, sound sources, and muses; 7) virtuosic writing; and 8) future career goals.

Figure 5.1. Research questions with emergent salient themes.



Support of Family

Parents

As the composers described their experiences as developing musicians, they often referred to the role their families played in their lives. As stated previously, several researchers have described the role of families in musical development. Howe (1997) stated that professional, trained, Western musicians consistently reported the support of parents during their adolescent development.

In the same way, Maureen, David, Henry, and Reese all described their parents as overtly supportive and encouraging of their musical interest, especially their creative endeavors. In Maureen's case, her parents encouraged her to pursue music and consistently encouraged her pursuit of music as a performer and composer. She states, "my parents were very supportive in everything I did, music and sports, they attended my lessons and my games, they were great about taking a active part in what I was doing. I always felt they wanted to give me good chances at things" (Interview, March 12, 2007). Similarly, David describes being raised in a household where creative behaviors were not only encouraged but were expected. He states, "My parents are hippies, they were always good about letting us be ourselves and not fall into the vapid pit of pop culture" (Interview, March 10, 2007). In Henry's case, his parents' religious beliefs and passion for the arts were highly influential. He comments, "my parents never really forced us to do things, we were just a family where you did what your say is right…my parents never made me play baseball or cello; they just gave me options" (Interview, March 2, 2007). Reese describes his parents as highly educated and

passionate about their academic pursuits. Reese states that they consistently provided encouragement to pursue intellectual and artistic endeavors. “My parents are academic, elitist, Northeast, Ivy League, over achievers; they did everything in their power to make sure I could be the same” (Interview, February 28, 2007). Although the four composers described their parents in distinctive ways, there was one common theme shared by all— parents who were uncompromisingly supportive of their musical pursuits. For each of them, their parents provided access to quality instruments, private lessons, and entrée to cultural events such as symphonies, operas, and theater.

Siblings

Borthwick and Davidson (2002) state that a child’s identity as a musician is significantly shaped by the influence of siblings who are themselves musicians. This is the case for David and Henry, who were raised in households where their siblings pursued music beyond an amateur level. Having musically active siblings influenced their compositional development in meaningful ways. In David’s case, his parents’ insistence that he and his siblings limit watching television prompted the family to interact with one another. David comments, “we couldn’t watch television so we had to rely on ourselves. I used to make up tunes we could play together. They weren’t real compositions; it was more like we would sit around and improvise together” (Interview, March 10, 2007). Although David discounts the validity of his music making as “real,” in reality, the improvisational skills he was learning through family play were important in his early creative musical work.

Henry's case is dissimilar to David's experience in many ways. For Henry, even though his sister was an accomplished pianist and violist they never practiced or performed together. Henry states that composing music has always been personal and isolating. "When I compose its quiet time for me. It is a means of reflection and provides me with solace." He further comments "my sister is the performer; she would perform for guests and family, I was glad she did because I hated that kind of showing off' (Interview, March 2, 2007). Although Henry did not participate musically with his sister, hearing her play, and engaging in dialogue about music most likely influenced his formative musical experiences.

Lastly, Borthwick and Davidson (2002) state that within family structures, siblings often differentiate themselves by identifying with a distinguishing musical roles or genre. In Henry's case, his sister didn't define herself with a musical genre, she adopted the role of performer and entertainer. In this way, they each had their own musical identity—Henry as a composer and his sister as a performer. These roles, though adopted in early high school years, are still apparent. Henry pursues a composition degree and Angela a performance degree in their undergraduate study.

Piano as a Symbol and Sound Source

Researchers (Davidson, 2002; Goertzal, Goertzal, & Goertzal, 1978) have often noted the importance of supportive home environments in the formative development of musicians. In this study, each of the composers described nurturing households, and interestingly, their homes shared one similar detail. Each composer commented that

when they grew up they ‘played’ with the piano. For example, Maureen states, “my parents decided to get me lessons because I often sat the piano and banged on the keys” (Interview, March 5, 2007). Henry, David, and Reese also described similar experiences of toying with the piano and using it to explore sounds at a very early age. I believe the piano was important to each composer early in their development for reasons that extend beyond childish play. For each of the composers, the piano can be viewed as symbol to represent the value and significance of music to the family. It represents a commitment of money towards the arts as even today, pianos and piano maintenance are costly. It symbolizes that someone else in the family—a parent, grandparent, or sibling, is also engaged in musical participation. Furthermore, the piano may have played an important role as a sound source for each of the composers. Because of the piano’s accessibility and ease of use, each of the composers utilized the piano as a sound source early in their development. Maureen, David, and Henry continue to use the piano as a compositional tool when writing. In summary, the piano can be viewed as representation of a family’s support of active musical participation. This is certainly the case for the composers in this study, who all prospered musically due to the piano as an instrument and as a symbol.

View of Self as a Performer

Although all of the composers benefited from a nurturing home environment that fostered musical performance, only one of the composers, David, considers himself as musically adept. Furthermore, David is also the only composer who views a

composer's ability to perform at a virtuosic level as valuable. He states, "I have noticed that my teacher and the others here that I admire are all wonderful pianists, that's why I keep taking lessons; Composer-performers have the best of both worlds and get jobs" (Interview, March 15, 2007). At another interview he remarked, "my skills as a pianist have always been a strong suit. I think, I could major in piano here if I wanted to but I would have to invest more time in the practice room" (Interview, March 10, 2007). In David's case, he believes he is capable of performing at the same level as the performance majors, but chooses not to pursue a performance degree due to his lack of motivation to practice

David's self-image as a performer is dissimilar from the other three participants in significant ways. While David felt he had the skills to pursue a performance degree, Maureen, Henry, and Reese did not. In Maureen's case she enjoyed playing the trombone and performed in numerous auditioned groups throughout high school. However, after a negative experience with a private trombone instructor in college she no longer felt proficient as a performer. She states, "after taking lessons my freshman year I didn't want to perform again. I haven't picked up the trombone since" (Interview, April 11, 2007). Henry stopped identifying himself as a performer during his senior year of high school when, upon consultation with his private cello teaching and his father, it was decided he did not have the skills required to major in performance at the conservatory level. "I remember when my dad came to my lesson with me and we all talked about whether I should audition, my private teacher was pretty honest with me, and now that I am here and see the performance level I think she was right" (Interview,

March 16, 2007). In Reese's case he states that he enjoyed singing and playing the guitar, but never considered himself a performer. He states, "I'm not going to kid myself, my playing is for shit and I hate practicing, so no, I am not a performer" (Interview, February 28, 2007). Although their musical experiences differed considerably, neither Reese, Henry, nor Maureen considered their performance skills as adequate. Consequently, the three participants no longer classify themselves by their principal instruments, such as cellist, trombonist, or singer; they now simply label themselves as composers.

All four composers describe their appreciation for the exclusion of performance requirements as part of the composition degree program. For example, Henry states, "part of my reason for coming here is that I never had to perform. I mean I had to be in choir for a year but that's it" (Interview, March 16, 2007). Reese states, "performers here are mindless, they go into practice rooms and repeatedly do the same things over and over. They are drones. Thank God we don't have performance requirements" (Interview, February 28, 2007). Maureen and David shared similar sentiments. All of the composers were grateful for the absence of requirements to demonstrate proficiency as a performer. In summary, David was the only participant who views competence as a performer as valuable for composers. Maureen, Henry, and Reese do not view their lack of performance skills as an obstacle in their development as composers.

Pursuing Multiple Undergraduate Degrees

Of the four composers in this study, three are pursuing multiple undergraduate degrees. In Henry and David's cases, they pursue double degrees as indemnity against finding a job utilizing their composition degree. Henry states, "it is much easier to get a job in recording than in composition, and I think working in the studio helps me think about my own writing" (Interview, March 5, 2007). David's second degree is mechanical engineering; his preference is to one day obtain a job that allows him to compose, but he realizes the prospects are limited. "Of course I would love to have a cushy professor job teaching composition, who wouldn't, but you have to be a superstar to get one" (Interview, March 12, 2007). Henry and David both feel that the field of composition provides few opportunities for employment; consequently, they are pursuing second degrees in fields they feel are more likely to provide job opportunities.

Reese's reasons for a second degree differ from Henry and David. Reese's second major is in psychology; a degree choice he readily acknowledges provides few future job opportunities. "My parents jokingly say that I've found the two least employable majors here" (Interview, February 28, 2007). In Reese's case his decision to major in psychology stemmed from his frustration with the music composition curriculum. He states:

> The liberal arts courses they provide for music students are an abomination. I could feel my brain atrophy while sitting in the classes. I knew by my sophomore year that if I didn't find a degree program outside the music school my I.Q was going to drop by 50 points. I mean, the performance majors are just

> dumb as rocks. I'm sorry, you might think I'm mean, but they are. They are fine with the math class that teaches how to balance a checkbook, but I find it insulting. (Interview with Reese, March 3, 2007)

For Reese, a degree outside of the music school provides intellectual opportunities that he believes the music school lacks. Reese does not plan to pursue a graduate degree in psychology; he fully plans to make a career in music.

Ironically, Maureen, the only composer not pursuing a double degree, is the participant most open minded about a future vocation outside of music. She states, "I sometimes think I will go into marketing. I think I would be great at bundling things and finding ways to spin ads so teenagers would buy something" (Interview, March 12, 2007). Although Maureen does plan on furthering her music education in graduate school, she remains very open to the idea of pursuing an alternate career.

In summary, all of the composers are very aware of the difficulties that surround finding jobs in the music field and composition specifically. By majoring in engineering and recording arts, David and Henry are proactively planning for the reality that they may not obtain jobs in composition. However, they both want to continue composing as long as possible and will consider a job outside of music if absolutely necessary. Reese is equally passionate about pursuing a career in music and chooses to double major due to intellectual curiosity. Although not a double major, Maureen is pessimistic about her chances of finding a career in composition; she is already considering vocations outside of music that she may be interested in following.

Role of Competition

One of the most striking themes to emerge from the cross-case analysis was the role of competition in shaping composers' identity development. All four composers in this study described how winning composition competitions provided valuable watershed experiences in their development. Furthermore, each of the participants described how the contests provided motivation to continue composing, as well as validation that their writing was worthwhile. Numerous researchers have investigated the impact of motivation within the domain of performance (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002; Davidson, 2002; Geen, Beatty, & Arkin, 1984; Howe, 1997; Trevarthan, 1999). However, little is known about the role of motivation or competition for developing composers.

In Maureen's case, she first won a competition her junior year of high school. She states:

> I really didn't want to, but then I won, I couldn't believe it. I still have it; it is for piano and trombone. My parents were thrilled when I won; I think they were as surprised as I was. After that I think it gave me confidence to apply here for school. I mean I got into every school I applied to, so I guess at that point too, that helped me think what I was doing was right. (Interview, March 3, 2007)

In Maureen's case, the experience of winning a contest not only bolstered her confidence, it solidified the notion of composition as a career. David's experience was analogous. In high school, his parents encouraged him to enter his music into a contest. He states:

> Starting in 9th grade I would enter pieces into the National Federation Competition. And most up until 11th grade they were all piano and I'd send them in and sometimes I'd record them or sometimes I'd just send them a MIDI. I did the first time. I think it was 9th grade and I got like they told me I got 2nd place in state. I don't know how many people entered, but I know it might have been one or two people. Then it went to regional and then one of my pieces actually went forward to state. For the last 3 years, maybe 4, I either won first or second in the state.

David also elaborated by describing how it motivated and influenced him:

> It was hugely motivating. I got money, which was nice. I got 10 dollars in second place, but I won something at regionals I got 100 dollars for them. That was very nice, yes, and very motivating. I think around that point, I don't know, may not be entirely true, but I think I learned that around, like that was when I decided what I was supposed to be doing. I can put it two ways. I can either say I have much more to offer in composition than I do in piano or I have much less to offer in piano that I do with composition. Either way, after winning, I decided composition and started writing more. (Interview, March 12, 2007)

Similarly, Henry entered his first composition contest in high school, and like Maureen and David he was motivated by his success. Additionally, like the others he was hesitant about entering his work, believing it was not worthy of a prize. Henry states:

> My dad wanted me to enter and man, I did not want to. I was like there is no way this piece can win; it is too simple. But I spent a lot of time putting it into

> the computer and I figured I could at least make it look nice. I couldn't believe it when I got the letter and won…That competition told me, I think, that I could write well enough to apply for school, which of course I did. This was my first choice; I was like wow, they will perform everything I write, and I thought was that amazing. (Interview, March 2, 2007).

Lastly, Reese's experience was comparable. Working with his composition teacher in high school, he won numerous contests. And, like the others, his experience winning competitions in high school inspired the confidence he needed to apply for a composition degree.

Furthermore, the role of competition and its importance to the four participants continues into their undergraduate education. Reese explains:

> I won contests in high school, which was OK, but here at school there is a lot more pressure. I mean it not a gimmie; you have to earn it. I have won a lot of contests here and, like I said, when the faculty want something written they usually come to me. This solo cello piece I was talking about, I won a contest here and I got like eight performances this year, which is ridiculous. (Interview, March 3, 2007)

At the undergraduate level, Reese still values contests and considers winning as validation for his work. Similarly, in Maureen's case, winning a competition profoundly shaped her undergraduate experience. She states, "I was going to quit composing and change majors, I had decided although I hadn't told anyone. My composition teacher nominated a piece of mine for a major ASCAP prize, and I won.

After that I decided to stay" (Interview, March 7, 2007). Likewise, Henry struggled when he first entered the university and worried that his work was not as strong as his peers. However, his second year he won the Gold Composer of the Year Award, which is awarded by the school of music. Henry states:

> My teacher said, send this cello trio and I said ok, I'll send it. And then I got a phone call in May or something and they told me that I won this decade award. So that was pretty cool. There is another thing. I wrote this short little brass piece and that won second prize or something, and I said whoa, isn't this great. It's funny, that's the last award I got in awhile. (Interview, March 10, 2007)

Lastly, David explains how competitions have shaped his confidence and motivation in college. "I won the freshman award for outstanding freshman; I'm the only one, but you know, I still like winning and I'm going to put it on my resume" (Interview, March 2, 2007).

Kohn (1992) suggests that competition is pervasive throughout American culture. He states:

> Life for us has become an endless succession of contests. From the moment the alarm clock rings until sleep overtakes us again, from the time we are toddlers until the day we die, we are busy struggling to outdo others. This is our posture at work and at school, on the playing field and back at home. It is the common denominator of American life. (p. 4)

Kohn further asserts that although competition is commonly viewed as a powerful motivational tool, research suggests otherwise. Specifically, Kohn cites numerous

research articles that state competition inhibits tasks involving complex thinking skills such as creativity and problem solving. Austin (1990) utilized Kohn's findings concerning the detrimental aspects of competition within the framework of music education. Austin suggests:

> It behooves music educators to invest less time in the pursuit of competitive success and more time in determining how to best encourage stable patterns of long-term motivation and achievement among all students. (p. 25)

Austin asserts that while much has changed over the past sixty years since the music contest movement began, "the profession clings to the tradition of competition and contests with a level of single-mindedness that defies logic" (p. 25). The degree to which competition shapes music education is well beyond of the scope of this study; however, the influence of competition in the lives of the four composers in this study is undeniable.

For all four participants in the study, winning competitions profoundly shaped their experiences as developing composers. In high school, the competitions bolstered their self-esteem and provided motivation and encouragement to pursue a degree in composition. In college, contests have considerable significance, not only in terms of self-esteem or motivation; competition prizes are viewed as symbols of success. As David suggests, "When I decided which composer I wanted to study with I just looked at what major prizes they won" (Interview, March 2, 2007). The four composers know that in order to distinguish themselves from their peers they must win competitions. "We are all friends, but we keep up with who has done what, and if someone wins a

prize you can tell everyone sucks up to them, mainly because everyone thinks that maybe that person is the next big thing, and they want to know him" (Interview, February 28, 2007). As Csikszentmihalyi (1996) suggests, successful creative professionals are those individuals who work within prescribed socially constructed parameters of what achievement entails. For composers like Maureen, David, Henry, and Reese, part of the undergraduate experience is discovering how success is defined within the academy. Furthermore, they are learning from their mentors and peers how markers like competition prizes are crucial to their future success in composition.

Soundscapes, Sound Sources, and Muses

The themes of soundscapes, sound sources, and muses arose from reexamining the second research question within the context of the cross-case analysis. While it seems logical that by examining each composer's case side-by-side I would note analogous processes or procedures; much to my surprise, I found nothing about their compositional styles or voice comparable. Before beginning this study I made two assumptions about undergraduate composers' voices or style. First, because the composers attended the same school and were influenced by same faculty, I expected some similarities in writing styles. Second, it seems that because composers are a small population, they would easily and perhaps unintentionally influence one another. What I determined after interviewing the four composers is that they each approach composition in very distinctive ways.

In Maureen's case, her compositional voice is directly related to the visual and aural images. Maureen rarely uses a sound source like the piano, because she feels it limits her ability to imagine the sounds in her head. She states, "I first started imagining sounds in my head at an early age. It is hard to explain. They are like colors in the sky, but in my head and I can turn the knobs to adjust it" (Interview, March 3, 2007). For Maureen, composition begins with very imaginative play, "like a manipulated or forced dream" (March 3, 2007).

When Maureen composes she doesn't imagine herself playing instruments or moving with the music in any way. She states:

> When I dream of music it has to be really quiet and pretty dark out, that's best, because I manipulate the sounds better. After I lay down and dream out the piece then I usually go to my desk and try to sketch out the shapes of the piece. I'm not doing pitches, well maybe some pitch sets, sometimes, I just draw, like figures that help me remind what the shape of the notes are. (Interview with Maureen, March 3, 2007)

I asked Maureen how she knew what the pitches were since she dreamed away from a sound source and in her dreams she didn't imagine the instruments. "For me, especially now, the notes are details. I write the melody in forms that I want and I write the melodies in forms, and I know theory enough to be able to harmonize things the ways I want it. I mean, I know how to use 9ths and 11ths, and I usually write in either B major or G# minor because I know better how they sound from seeing the paper." In Maureen's case, she doesn't place as much value on the particular sound of the pitches

as she does the overall shape and form of the piece. She states, “I like telling the performers not to get to concerned with the pitches to miss the important things” (Interview, March 12, 2007).

Finally, for Maureen, her compositional voice has changed dramatically since entering the academy. Beginning her freshman year, Maureen became increasingly interested in minimalism. She states, “like I said I started tearing my music up and becoming economical with my music. I am trying to use the absence of space and understand that and the silence” (Interview, March 12, 2007). Maureen has fully adopted an intellectual approach to organizing and structuring her work. Additionally, she is idolizing and mirroring composers like John Cage who integrated personal philosophies within their voice and style. Maureen’s compositional voice is complicated; it is both abstract and emotive as she draws upon her dreamlike process. Yet as she notates, it is mechanical, formulaic, and highly intellectualized.

In David’s case, his composition differs radically for Maureen. David writes almost exclusively at the piano. His compositional style is directly linked to his pianistic abilities, and he struggles with the notion of working away from a sound source. “My teacher is asking to do some things. I know he wants to get me away from the piano, but it’s like a crutch I know, I mean, I have to hear it” (Interview, March 3, 2007). Whereas Maureen thinks of large, musical gestures, David is concerned with each individual pitch and how it relates to the keyboard. “If I can’t play it and hear it, typically I don’t write it. I know it limits me but I like the control of knowing what I doing is what I want” (March 3, 2007).

David's music is not programmatic in nature, he doesn't write metaphorically, and his impetus for writing is based on improvisational "diddling" at the piano. David's compositional process begins by playing a piece on the piano then letting his mind wander until he is improvising something that he finds noteworthy. David's composition process is largely improvisational and kinesthetic, he states, "I have to feel it, I mean really feel it before I can like it and write it. If I get in it in my hands I have a better shot at getting it down" (March 3, 2007). David is only composer who insisted I watch how he writes in order to appreciate him as a composer. For one of our interviews we met in a rehearsal space that included a piano. David was correct. Upon watching him compose, I did understand his process differently. David began demonstrating his process of composing, improvising, and diddling by playing a Chopin etude. Within a few minutes David had changed and altered the piece in numerous clever ways, and I understood what he meant by extending the music.

Whereas Maureen has to dream about music in order to write, David has to play and feel it. In David's case he is less concerned with extended compositional techniques or academic approaches to writing, he is most concerned with learning to notate or capture his improvisations accurately. In summary, David's compositional voice is primarily based upon his ability to extend and improvise music that he is able to play at the piano.

Henry writes in a similar fashion, he relies heavily on the piano during his writing process. However, for Henry the piano acts a tool to verify what he is written, his compositional ideas begin to form away from the piano. He states, "I used to write

at the piano but my teacher forced me to stop, and I know why. If you write a piece for the cello at the piano it sounds like a piano piece at the cello" (Interview, March 7, 2007). Henry writes away from a sound source to facilitate a more idiomatic approach to writing for various instruments.

In Henry's case, his compositional voice is influenced by his unique motivation for writing. Henry's compositions serve a specific purpose; his works are a personal expression of faith to be utilized by others in religious services. Unlike Maureen, Henry is not interested in intellectual or academic approaches to writing. Furthermore, while he appreciates other composers' styles for their academic merit, he remains steadfast in his use of traditional tonal harmony. He states, "I have heard some religious music in 12-tone, and such but I thought it was ridiculous. Religious music has to forge a connection and I know that my music should speak to people" (Interview, March 7, 2007). In summary, due to Henry's strong religious faith and utilitarian approach to music, his compositional style differs greatly from his peers and mentors.

While Henry's compositional voice is influenced by his faith, Reese is influenced by his passion for theater. Furthermore, of the four composers, Reese is most interested in philosophical and academic approaches to writing. Reese compares writing music to completing a crossword puzzle, he views composing as an exercise in manipulating shapes rather than sounds. When reviewing one of Reese's scores I asked Reese to reflect on the harmonic progression within the work. He states:

> You know I never do this, I never think like that. I mean, I try not to. Who cares if it's a V-I? I just look at things like: Is it parallel to the melody? Is it

> dissonant? Does it jump or is it smooth? It is not about the notes, it's how the music forms to what I am trying to convey. (Interview, March 3, 2007)

As Reese composes he translates the feelings he wishes to emote through musical figures. Since his work almost always involves text, he uses text painting and the musical figurations associated with the text as the principal musical catalyst. For Reese, his use of musical shape, and indifference to pitches, has evolved since entering the composition program. Reese's craft as a composer is directly linked to his ever-growing interest in theater and the role of language within music. As Reese suggests, it is difficult to ascertain if his work is spoken poetry with music, or music with spoken word. His heavy and intentional use of language within his work has blurred boundaries, boundaries that Reese enjoys exploring. He states, "I just hate being labeled, and I refuse to be. I know some people think my work is performance art and not music, but that is fine with me. I mean, you either get it, or you don't, and if you have to explain it to people it's probably not worth it" (Interview, March 3, 2007).

Virtuosic Writing

Perhaps one of the topics the four composers disagreed on most concerned how virtuosic rhythmic and harmonic elements are both viewed and valued. For two of the composers, Maureen and David, musical complexity equates to greater compositional ability. In other words, if a piece is complex rhythmically and harmonically, they believe it is considered more sophisticated by their peers and professors. For example, David states:

> I don’t really sit around and try to make my music difficult, but if you use modern effects like sul tasto, and advanced harmonics on the violin, it does show that you know the instrument. I think there is a lot to be said for writing music that lays well on an instrument. You know, so it sounds complex for the listener but in reality it isn’t that difficult for the performers. That way, you get complex music and you don’t have to sweat not having a crazy good performer. (Interview, March 3. 2007)

Furthermore, Maureeen believes that complex music is given more value when being evaluated for competitions. In this way, she feels pressured to use complex rhythmic gestures in order to demonstrate her compositional aptitude.

Contrastingly, Reese and Henry both feel that virtuosic writing is neither encouraged nor valued. Interestingly, Reese does not feel that his composition teacher wishes him to write in more complex ways, nor does he feel that composers in the department who write difficult music are more respected than others. Reese states, “thankfully, there are no real demands on us in terms of a specific voice or style—people here just concentrate on their own voice as opposed to anything showy or flashy” (Interview, February 28, 2007). For Henry, most of his music is written for religious services in Protestant churches and not the concert hall. Therefore, he feels he must limit his music so it easily playable by church choruses and orchestras. Henry states:

> At times I am a little upset that I just cannot write anything that comes to mind. I have to really think about what is possible in most churches. When I write I

> think of my mom and dad and wonder if they were to get the music, whether they would be able to play or sing it. I think my composition teacher wishes I would break out sometimes, but like I say, I enjoy my music being clear and easy to follow. (Interview, March 14, 2007)

In summary, Reese and Henry compose for vastly different reasons, yet each write for a distinctive audience. Reese's work is meant for the theater while Henry's is catered towards religious services. Because their work is directed toward a specific audience Reese and Henry may not feel pressed to prove themselves. Conversely, David is a freshman who worries that his work is not as mature as his peers, and feels that writing in virtuosic ways demonstrates his compositional abilities.

Cross-Case Analysis: A Summary

In the second half of this chapter, I have presented a cross case analysis to illuminate salient themes that emerged from looking across the cases of the four participants. The themes that emerged to illuminate the first question include: support of family, piano as a symbol, view of self as performer, pursuing multiple degrees and role of competition. To explore the second research question, I presented the students' descriptions of sound scapes, source sources, and muses. Finally, in answering the third research question, I examined the ways virtuosic writing styles influence the participants' writing styles. In the next chapter, I present how the themes that emerged from the three subsidiary research questions support and frame the primary question

and phenomena that were the impetus of this study—what comprises a compositional identity?

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I provide a summary of the primary themes in this study. I begin by recapitulating my rationale for examining the experience of undergraduate composition majors within the framework of musical identity. Next, I revisit the research questions to organize the principal themes that emerged from the data. Subsequently, I consider implications of this study for music education and composition pedagogy. Lastly, I provide implications for practice and recommendations for future research.

Numerous researchers have cited the need for research on compositional practices of young musicians (Hickey, 2002; Webster, 1992). While academicians have investigated how composers express individuality as children (Stauffer, 1998), as teens (Tsisserev, 1998), and as adults (Barrett, 2006), the body of work is just beginning to develop. The deficiency in research concerning compositional practices of young composers, specifically pre-professional composers, provided the initial impetus for this study.

After completing a pilot study, I began to notice similarities in the ways the participants described their formative experiences to recent sociological research concerning musical identities. Consequently, I concluded that social psychology research concerning musical identities could provide a useful framework for exploring the development of undergraduate composers.

Undergraduate composers offer distinctive insight into the experience of becoming a composer. For many young musicians, acceptance into an undergraduate composition program is the first time they overtly classify themselves as composers. In this way, their entrée into the academy not only provides a platform for musical study, it is the beginning of an apprenticeship to a sophisticated musical tradition and craft. Undergraduate students are at a transitional stage of life. They are young enough to reflect on watershed moments that led to their musical development, yet are old enough to understand the expectations associated with success as a professional composer.

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the formation and development of undergraduate students' compositional identity. Additionally, I sought to provide a broad picture of undergraduate composers' experiences to further music educators' understanding of their creative development.

This study stems from my own experiences as a musician. Unquestionably, my personal experiences as a composer influenced this research. I view, describe, analyze, and process life experiences through a composer's lens. As I completed my undergraduate degree in music education, and later my master's degree in composition, I became increasingly interested in possible intersections between composition and music education. Accordingly, throughout the study, I continually strove to acknowledge my familiarity as an insider and openly address my subjectivity.

Each composer's description of compositional development was presented through a narrative or story told from his own perspective. This approach was taken to reveal subtleties in the participants' stories and provide the reader with thorough

descriptions of the four composers. To further analyze and represent data, I employed a case study research design as outlined in numerous methodological texts (Creswell, 2005; Glesne, 2006). By providing a narrative account of each composer, in addition to a within and cross-case analysis, my goal was to examine the experience of the four undergraduate composers from multiple vantage points.

Recapitulation of Research Questions

In this section, I review the three subsidiary research questions to summarize salient findings from chapter 5. This review will lead to the presentation and discussion of the primary research question.

1. What do the students identify as the features that lead to their compositional identity?

Five prominent themes emerged from the interviews with the participants. First, each of the composers described the positive support they received from their parents both financially and emotionally. Each recognized that their parents provided exceptional opportunities for musical exposure and learning. Second, the composers were raised in households that valued art music and its study. Third, although the composers described their abilities as performers differently, they each participated in ensembles that performed sophisticated literature within their K-12 education. The students were able to recount, in detailed and nuanced ways, specific musical pieces they performed in high school. Fourth, all four composers expressed their enthusiasm for musical composition, yet each plans for an alternate vocation. Three of the four composers are pursuing dual degrees in order to prepare for professional lives outside

of music composition after graduation. In this way, a large portion of the composers' undergraduate experience includes facing the very real possibility that their future employment will not include composing. Lastly, the composers prominently identified the importance of competition for validating their work and that of others. All four composers in this study won competitions in high school. Each identified winning a competition as the principal reason they believed themselves capable of obtaining a composition degree. Additionally, the pressure to win competitions during their program as an undergraduate student shaped the way they write and present their music. Furthermore, the participants were aware of the competitions their composer-teachers had won and viewed their winning as the most significant marker of their professional success.

2. *How do undergraduate composers describe their compositional voice or style?*

The field of composition is distinctive within musical study because it is intrinsically creative. The aspiration to write in an idiosyncratic style was immediately recognizable when interviewing the participants. Unlike a performance identity, a compositional identity is heavily influenced by the need to find one's own voice and create a distinctive style. While it seems logical that examining each composer's style side-by-side would illustrate similar compositional processes or procedures, much to my surprise, I found tremendous dissimilarity between the participants. As I began this study, I made two assumptions about undergraduate composers' styles. First, because the composers attended the same university, I expected resemblance in writing styles. Second, it seemed logical that due to the small population of composers in one

institution, students would easily and perhaps unintentionally influence one another. However, after interviewing the four composers, I noticed that the four composers approached compositional style in very distinctive ways.

For example, composing was compared to completing a crossword puzzle—both activities were described as academic and cerebral. The visual shape of the melodies and harmonies on the page was more important than the actual sound. In contrast, composing was also depicted as emotional and dramatic. Compositions were extensions of improvisations; concerns about notation were secondary to self-expression.

The participants demonstrated contrasting compositional styles because they each approached the process of composition differently. They each acknowledged that their compositional processes directly shape their style. Furthermore, they each intentionally altered their compositional process to explore ways to improve their compositions. Whether intentionally concentrating on more sophisticated harmonic contrast or attempting to compose away from the piano, composers were encouraged to expand their compositional styles by exploring new and divergent compositional practices during undergraduate study. In sum, undergraduate composers portrayed their composition style in relation to their evolving compositional practices.

3. What do the students identify as influences on their style?

This question was designed to illuminate how composers view their own writing and provide insight into the role of outside influences on their own creative development. For some composers, musical decisions are entirely free (or so they

claim), while others admittedly borrow styles and techniques they admire from other composers. Each of the composers wrote for vastly different reasons and for dissimilar audiences or listeners. For example, the compositional choices made when writing music for church services varied greatly from music written for the concert hall. The composers' perceived audience influenced the way they considered composition. Furthermore, the composers' intended audience also shaped their attitude towards validation and acceptance. Because some of the participants wrote for very specific audiences like the church or theater, acceptance and validation stemmed from audience approval. For others whose music was not written for a specific audience, validation was gained from mentors and peers.

One emergent theme concerned how virtuosity is viewed and valued by peers and mentors. Participants varied in identifying virtuosity as a goal in their work. Two participants equated musical complexity with superior compositional facility. In other words, if a piece is complex rhythmically and harmonically, it is considered more sophisticated by their peers and professors. The other two composers were less concerned with virtuosic writing; again, perhaps this stemmed from their focus on specific audiences.

Primary Research Question

The primary research question that guided this study was: What comprises an undergraduate compositional identity? As the narratives in chapter 4 demonstrated, there is no one path to distinguishing oneself as a composer. Life's narratives are never

so tidy. Yet, the experiences of the four composers in this study provide insight into ways that young people come to define themselves as composers.

At the beginning of this study, I referenced Dewey's notion that artistic creation is a process of simultaneous transformation of artists and materials (Dewey, 1958). Though Dewey intended this statement for all of the arts, his words took on particular meaning as I studied the experiences of the four participants. The importance of a nurturing home environment, encouraging parents, influential crystallizing experiences, quality musical instruction, and positive reinforcement were undeniable in the composers' development. Each of these elements not only contributed to the young musicians' decisions to write music, it influenced their view of themselves both personally and professionally. In this way, the composers wrote music to facilitate their self-identification as distinctive persons and musicians. This is congruent with the work of Macdonald, Hargreaves, and Miell (2002) who categorize this type of identification through specialization as developing an *identity in music (IIM)*.

The participants' identities as composers extended beyond their individual writing processes and products. They each expressed the importance of being a part of a community of professional composers and peers engaged in composition study. Each was aware of how people both inside and outside of the music community view and stereotype composers and artists. Consequently, the composers' identities were shaped by the way they positioned themselves within the composition community that surrounded them. Macdonald et al. define this type of identity association as *music in identities (MII).* All four of the participants were aware of the stigmas and stereotypes

that surround the label of composer from musicians and non-musicians. For the composers, their peers and mentors provided a support system for negotiating the social and musical difficulties associated with majoring in composition. In sum, music composition provided both a vehicle for self-representation (IIM), and a means for aligning oneself with a socialized group identity (MII).

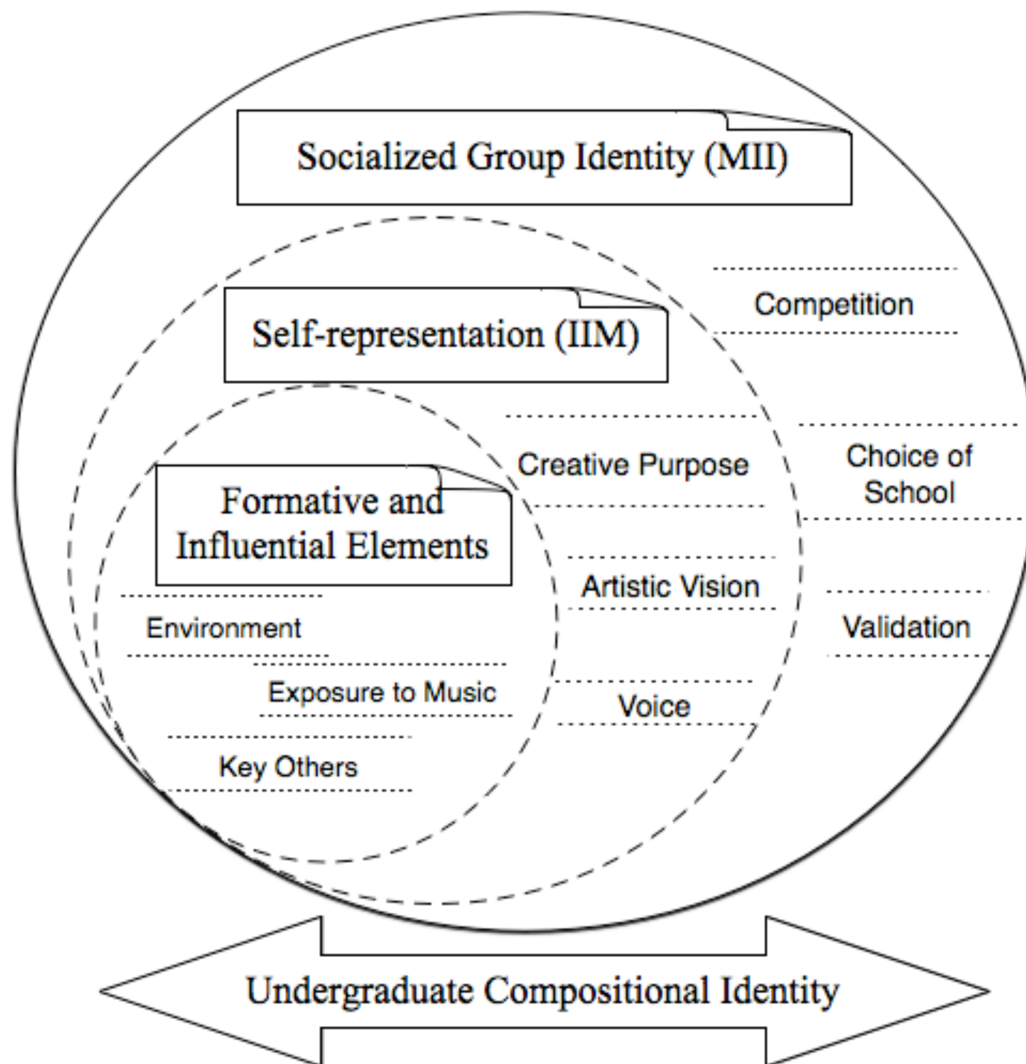
While Dewey pointed to a relationship between artists and their materials, I note a relationship between composers and their surroundings. The four composers in this study actively constructed and reconstructed their individualized compositional identity (voice, artistic vision, creative purpose) in tandem with the way they view or position themselves within the composition community as a whole (through compositional style or school, validation, competition). Subsequently, an undergraduate compositional identity is a complex interplay between the way composers view themselves as artists, and the way they position themselves within society as a whole.

Model for Undergraduate Compositional Identity

Davidson's factors that influenced a performer identity—environment, exposure, and role of key others served as a guide, *a priori* to investigate an undergraduate compositional identity. These three factors served as important foundational elements for the composers. Yet, as described above, individuals' compositional identity and composition community also meaningfully shaped their undergraduate compositional identity. Acting together, these three elements serve as a

model for ways undergraduate composers construct and reconstruct their identities (see Figure 5.2.).

Figure 5.2. Model for Undergraduate Compositional Identity



Implications for Practice

In this section, I provide suggestions for practice based on findings in this study. Recommendations are organized into two sections—implications for K-12 music education and postsecondary education. I caution the reader that implications set forth are based on the limited study of four undergraduate composers. The four cases cannot be generalized, but as in-depth portrayals of composers' lives, they may shed light on others composers' experience. Therefore, the implications I suggest are intended to guide music educators and composers as they continue to examine composition students' needs and musical development. Additionally, I provide implications due to the relative scarcity of research regarding the development of composers or to the study of composition majors. In closing, I offer methodological considerations and suggestions for future research.

Implications for Elementary and Secondary Music Education

The participants in this study were mostly dismissive when describing the role music education played in their compositional development. They each lamented that music education in their elementary and secondary schooling provided few opportunities for substantial creative development. However, ideas for compositional study were suggested by some of the participants' teachers. For example, Maureen's teacher supported her compositional interests, and to the best of her ability fostered an understanding of how music was constructed, though she herself admitted that she didn't understand compositional practices. Although music teachers may feel daunted

by the challenge of including composition in their programs, as Maureen expresses, simply allowing a forum for discussing composition can be meaningful and encouraging. By providing dialogue concerning composition in the classroom, music educators can shape the ways their students view composers and the composition process. The participants in this study all indicated that creative musical opportunities in their elementary and secondary musical programs might have facilitated their compositional development. This viewpoint is shared by numerous authors of recent studies that cite the importance of early exposure to creative musical activities (Daignault, 1996; McCoy, 1999; Younker, 1997).

For two of the participants, opportunities that were made available to them at summer camps and the new works and sounds they encountered in those settings were powerful watershed moments in their musical lives. In the repertoires or canons of musical literature performed by most band, orchestras, and choruses, music educators often fail to provide access to music that organizes sound in contemporary ways (Yale Seminar on Music Education, 1964). Maureen's musical interests were piqued after hearing the radical ways Berio and Ligeti constructed and utilized music. Perhaps by exposing students to current, modern music through both performance and listening opportunities, music educators can provide greater exposure to varied musical genres. As a result, students are both exposed to innovative and interesting new ways to write music, and opportunities to connect to the works of living composers.

Prior to the participants' undergraduate study, three of the composers had never met a professional composer. One way music educators could encourage dialogue

concerning composition is to invite guest composers into the classroom. Several programs like the Young Composers' Project advocate the inclusion of composers in the classroom. Additionally, several music educators have cited the importance of composers in the classroom (Colgrass, 2004; Sullivan, 2002;). The prevalence of composers in educational settings is uncertain, however (Berkley, 2004).

Finally, the participants each described the meaningful experience of hearing music they had written performed by their peers in high school. By encouraging students to share their creative musical endeavors, music educators can provide meaningful opportunities to have student work heard by others.

Implications for Postsecondary Education

Role of composition instructors. One of the themes that emerged from this study is the powerful role composer-teachers play in the lives of undergraduate students. Composer instructors should consider the ways in which their words and actions carry meaning for their students. The participants were often challenged by their teachers' encouragement to explore their own distinctive styles concurrent with the requirement to study diverse compositional techniques. Similarly, Barrett (2006) suggests that undergraduate composers are frustrated by the challenge of gaining acceptance from their teachers by demonstrating multiple compositional techniques, while developing an individualized compositional style. To provide clear learning goals for the student, composer-teachers should clearly articulate expectations for demonstrating development as a composer. Perhaps by providing a curriculum for studying

compositional techniques, both the teacher and student could address developmental concerns in a more organized and systematic way.

As stated in chapter 5, peers play a large role in the way undergraduate students form their identities. In the academy, it is crucial that music students are able to share and communicate their ideas in a setting that is both caring and constructive. As Chickering and Reisser (2002) suggest, undergraduates seek validation from people in their lives they view as honest, trustworthy, and knowledgeable. Although not an easy task, composer-teachers should provide a venue that allows for a kindhearted, yet honest critique.

On numerous occasions, participants made disparaging remarks when describing performers. Participants described how performers were often hesitant to perform new music and lamented performers' preferences for performing traditional repertoire. The negative stereotype surrounding new music made it difficult for the composers to find musicians to perform or even rehearse their work.

There was also a tension between the ways students described their performing abilities as compared to performance majors. Maureen, Henry, and Reese were all candid in describing their performance abilities as limited and unsophisticated. David was the only participant who positively described his abilities as a performer. However, all four of the composers did not describe themselves as expert musicians; performing was not considered part of their role as a composer. Perhaps composition programs should require composers to enroll in performance classes, as well as maintain a high standard of playing and performing. By requiring composers to stay engaged with

performers within their music communities, more dialogue would be possible between composers and performers.

The role of competition was prevalent in the lives of the undergraduate composers. For all four composers, winning competition prizes in both high school and college provided meaningful and lasting motivation to study competition. Because winning competitions appreciably influenced the musical lives of the participants, I provide several implications for composer-teachers. First, composer-teachers should clearly communicate to their students which compositional practices provide the most favorable opportunities to win competitions. I do not want to imply that winning competitions is the goal of any program or student. However, given the importance of competition prizes within the profession, the composer-teacher should maintain an open dialogue with students and openly discuss the pros and cons of writing in styles in vogue with competition committees. Second, because competitions are a powerful tool for motivation, more opportunities for competition should be made available to undergraduate composers. In this way, student composers are given the opportunity to showcase their work while becoming more comfortable with the competition process.

Methodological Implications

In this section, I address three methodological limitations of this study—the accuracy of students' descriptions of their completed work or work in progress, the interview protocol, and the sampling method. The first limitation of this study became apparent during the interview process. When using artifact elicitation I noticed a

disconnect between the participants' description of their work, and their actual compositions. Although this study did not focus on the products of the participants, I asked the composers to describe their work to prompt discussion. I avoided commenting or correcting students' remarks concerning their music because I was principally concerned with the ways they explained their work, rather than the accuracy of their descriptions. Furthermore, I did not want the composers to suspect I was evaluating or making value judgments during interviews; critiquing their work may have prevented an open dialogue. However, I did note inconsistencies in the way students described their work. To address the accuracy of students' descriptions, I provide three suggestions: utilizing examples of composition, visiting composition lessons, and viewing the composer in social contexts.

I refrained from providing examples of their music in this study for two reasons. First, I felt that providing examples of their musical work might compromise their anonymity. Second, I felt that my analysis and opinion of their work was immaterial to this particular study. However, as I listened to participants describe their compositions, I became increasingly aware of incongruities between the students' explanation of their work and the music that was being observed. For example, the students may have described their work as minimalist and tonal, when in my opinion, the music was neither. I soon realized that ways in which undergraduate students perceive their musical voice was not always accurate. One way to frame future research concerning the identity and development of undergraduate composers is to examine compositional identity using only the composer's notated work. In this way, the compositional product

of composers would be the principal source of data rather than the composer's description of their work. A more detailed and thorough examination of undergraduate students' compositions would allow the researcher to gain a more precise picture of composers' technique, style, and maturity.

Similarly, to gain a more accurate understanding of the students' compositional craft, I would meet with the participants' composition instructors and peers. By observing composition lessons I would examine the ways compositional craft is discussed and information is shared between teacher and student—giving particular attention to the social interactions between the two. I believe that observing the interactions between instructor and student would allow for a more telling examination of students' developing craft.

In future studies, I would consider spending extended periods of time with the composers as a group in the composition seminar setting. As discussed in chapter 5, the influence of peers in the lives of undergraduate students is notable. Therefore, by examining the social interactions that take place in the composition seminar, I might be able to develop a greater understanding of the ways certain writing styles or compositional techniques are valued. Moreover, I could observe how social dynamics among the composers and instructors within the composition seminar influence the way students form musical opinions and viewpoints.

A second methodological limitation concerns the time needed for participants to describe their work. The quick pace of the interview format may not have allowed participants sufficient time to express their ideas fully. To resolve this issue, I would

ask students to write their thoughts concerning their work, both technical and aesthetic. Perhaps the participants would feel more comfortable describing their work in written form instead of a conversational format. Third, in this study I employed a purposeful sampling method by choosing participants from a school of music with a well-known, large, undergraduate composition music program. For future research, a survey instrument could be utilized to characterize the experiences of a larger population of undergraduate composers. This form of quantitative study could allow for more specific evaluation of data concerning undergraduate composers' educational preparation, family history, exposure to composition in secondary school, etc. For example, a survey of composers could determine if issues concerning competition or distinctive voice are widespread throughout the composition community.

Recommendations for Future Research

Due to the complexity of undergraduate compositional identities, there are numerous opportunities for further study. In this section, I will present three distinct ways undergraduate compositional development may be examined in future research including the influence of the academy, development of student composers, and furthering musical identity research.

Influence of the Academy

More research is needed that examines the ways compositional practices and beliefs are filtered or transferred to aspiring composers. Currently, there is limited

research examining how beliefs and traditions are transmitted from professional composers to aspiring student composers. How does the musical value system in the academy shape the ways composition is perceived by high school students who wish to pursue music composition as a major? In other words, if young aspiring composers are aware that in order to gain acceptance into prominent composition programs their music must conform to a particular writing style or practice, how does their perception of art music influence their compositional development? Furthermore, if high school students and their music teachers are aware of current trends in composition, to what degree are students composing in a style that is required for admission? The pressure to assimilate and gain acceptance into a composition community is ubiquitous for apprenticing composers. To what degree is their own creative musical voice being shaped? Is the pressure to write in an acceptable style also present for undergraduate composers applying to prominent graduate programs in composition? In sum, future studies could examine how the application and admission process for music schools influence the musical choices of pre-professional composers.

In this study, participants stated that certain types of compositional practice denote compositional maturity. One marker includes the ability to notate music in virtuosic writing styles. For three of the participants, it was generally perceived that the more complex the music looks visually, the more advanced the composer's knowledge of music. Future studies could utilize a musical content analysis of award-winning compositions to determine whether such competitions favor virtuosic writing, which in turn influences young composers' styles.

Lastly, as Reese stated, there is often lack of communication concerning the career opportunities available to undergraduate composition majors after graduation. To date, little is known about the careers of recent undergraduate composition majors, specifically the degree that a composer's style and viewpoint change after leaving their composition community. By following undergraduate composition majors for five to ten years after graduation, a researcher could examine the ways students' compositional identities evolve after leaving the academy.

Apprenticing with an Eminent Composer

The relationship between a student and their composition instructor is one of the most influential in the experience of composers (Barrett, 2006). As numerous biographies of composers demonstrate, there is often a strong connection forged when studying composition. As Bennett (1976) describes, the relationship formed when studying composition often influences the ways students compose for a lifetime. Given this powerful theme, there is little research that details the process of composition instruction. More studies are needed to examine the ways composer-teachers shape the musical voices of their students. How does the composer-teachers' perceptions of his own musical identity influence the ways he mentor students? Furthermore, can similarities or differences be determined by examining the musical identities of composer-teachers? If so, how does this impact the culture of art music and the academy?

Development of Undergraduate Composers

The second category for future research centers on the experiences and development of the undergraduate composer. One theme to emerge from this study concerned the role of crystallizing experiences in the lives of developing composers. Future research could further examine how watershed moments influence young musicians to consider composing music as a means of self-expression. If crystallizing experiences like Maureen's exposure to contemporary music help students identify composition as a possible musical outlet, how can music educators provide similar opportunities for meaningful experiences that stimulate musical creativity?

Furthering Musical Identity Research

Lastly, in this study I have built upon the work of Davidson (2002) and others who have examined a performer identity. Future research could illuminate how other musical identities manifest themselves; moreover, how generalized interest and experiences in music become specialized identities to pursue for careers and vocations. For example, are there musical identities among musical theorists or music therapists? This study focused exclusively on trained Western composers, an admittedly small population of musicians. Further research is needed on the formation of creative musical identities outside the professional domain. For example, the musical identities of songwriters, improvisers, critics, or educators require additional investigation.

Conclusion

Undergraduate students are at the most lively and transitional stage of their adult lives (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Similarly, as the four participants in this study demonstrate, an undergraduate compositional identity is both dynamic and fluid. It is shaped during a tumultuous time of personal growth and social maturation juxtaposed with the pressures and expectations surrounding a composition degree. As Miell and Macdonald (2000) note, composers do not live in isolation. The stereotype of the composer as the recluse, working in seclusion, is fictitious. An undergraduate composer is subject to the tides of ever-evolving identities as independent and expressive young people, subjugated to the push and pull of the expectations surrounding a composition degree. An undergraduate's compositional identity is formed through a complex interplay of self-expression and musical growth, within a context of complex expectations that accompany composition as a field.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Date of Interview________________

Name of Interviewee:_____________

1. Tell me a little about yourself—where you are from?

2. How long have you been playing music?

3. When did you first realize that you really enjoyed music?

4. Did others encourage or discourage you musically?

5. What is your principal instrument?

6. Describe your musical experiences and influences in high school.

7. Describe your musical experiences and influences in middle school.

8. Describe your musical experiences and influences in elementary school.

9. Are your parents musicians?

10. When did you start creating music, in other words, creating music that was not written down? (Did you start improvising?)

11. Did your parents or guardians encourage you to create music?

12. Did your school instructors or private teachers encourage you to create your own music?

13. What ensemble are you in currently?

14. What are you writing right now?

15. Describe your process for writing music, when, where, what and why.

16. Who influences you the most?

Second Interview

Date of Interview________________

Name of Interviewee:_____________

1. What composition are you working on right now?
2. How did you decide to write what you are writing?
3. Has your writing changed since entering the University? If so, how?
4. If yes to 4, what are the influences encouraging change?
5. Have ear training classes changed the way you hear music?
6. Where do you draw ideas for music?
7. How did you hope your music will change or grow?
8. How do you hope it will stay the same?
9. How do you think such compositional growth occurs—how does one learn to compose?
10. Has being around other composers influenced your musical tastes? How?
11. Has being around other composers influenced your compositional process?
12. How does your composition instructor influence you?
13. What is your favorite part about being at this University and being a music major?
14. What do you want to write next? Why?
15. What is your favorite thing about being in college?
16. What is your least favorite?

17. How does your general experience as an undergraduate student influence you as a composer? Does it?
18. How do you think others view you in terms of your choice to be a composer?
19. How do you view yourself in relation to other undergraduates? Do you see yourself as similar or different?
20. How do you view yourself in relation to other music majors?

Third Interview

Date of Interview________________

Name of Interviewee:_____________

1. What are your peers' compositional styles like?
2. Are yours similar?
3. Do they influence you?
4. Do you think you influence them?
5. If so, how?
6. What influences your writing style?
7. What are some watershed moments in terms of your development as a composer?
8. Did anyone ever try and persuade you to major in composition?
9. What has kept you motivated to compose and major in composition?
10. How do faculty members influence your mindset?
11. Do you value some of the faculty members' comments more than others? Why?
12. Tell me about the teachers that you admire?

13. Do you see yourself trying to emulate them?
14. Do you seek to emulate them in terms of the personal interactions, or is it their compositional style alone that earns your respect?
15. What kind of composer do you respect? Why?
16. Do you think most undergraduate composers would agree with you?
17. Do you see yourself like most undergraduate composers? Why or why not?

Fourth Interview

Date of Interview________________

Name of Interviewee:_____________

1. Who would like to be able to emulate?
2. What are some of your latest technical insights you are incorporating into your music?
3. Do you see them making a difference?
4. How has your process changed in the past month? Year? Five years?
5. What are you most excited about when writing?
6. What are some of the things you feel you can improve upon?
7. How did you come to find out that you had those things to work on?
8. What is your dream piece like? What would it sound like? Who would play it?
9. Lets look at your earliest written compositions. Do you remember where you were when you wrote it?
10. What were you trying to convey? What were you thinking?

11. Do you think you were successful?

12. What were you thinking when you finished? Were you happy with it then?

13. What do you think of it now?

14. Do you look back at your previous works often?

15. Do you recycle your earlier works?

16. Let's look at a piece you wrote in high school. What is the story behind the piece?

17. What do you think as your look at it?

18. What do you like about the work?

19. What do you think needs improvement?

20. What was your motivation behind the work?

21. How much did others guide you in writing the piece?

22. How comfortable are you talking about your past writing?

Fifth Interview

Date of Interview________________

Name of Interviewee:_____________

1. In the future, do you see yourself as a professional composer?

2. What does that career look like to you?

3. Do most if your peers want to have a similar composition career?

4. How feasible do you think a career in music composition is?

5. Do you have a plan B?

6. Do you ever consider or think about a completely different field or life vocation?

7. Why do you think most people major in music composition?
8. Do you think they major in music for the right reasons?
9. What are the right reasons for majoring in music composition?
10. Knowing what you know now, would you encourage or discourage someone from majoring in composition in an undergraduate program?
11. Do you think undergraduates should be allowed to major in music composition? Or should they have to focus on performance and get a graduate degree in composition?
12. Do you have to have a degree in music composition to “make it”?
13. Can you think of examples of composers who are successful who didn’t major in composition?
14. What do you think “success” is within the field of music composition?
15. Do you think there are a lot of jobs out there?
16. How would you describe your ability in terms of compositional craft?
17. Is compositional craft needed to be successful?
18. What is your dream job?

Sixth Interview

The sixth interview was a reprise of the first five, providing an opportunity to explore issues that required further clarification.

Appendix B

Approval to Conduct Research from Northwestern IRB

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

Northwestern University
750 North Lake Shore Drive
Suite 700
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Phone 312-503-9338
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Northwestern Univ. School of Music 711 Elgin Road
Evanston IL 60208 USA

IRB Protocol Number: STU00000761
Meeting/Review Date: 3/28/2007
Review Type: Exempt
Protocol Sites: Northwestern University-Evanston; Other
Protocol Document:
Protocol Doc for Bruce Carter_Eirb 0.01

Protocol Title: A Qualitative Examination of Undergraduate Students' Compositional Experience

Submission(s) Considered: New Project
Status: APPROVED
The Institutional Review Board considered and approved your application for exemption from human subjects review for your project referenced above. The study has been declared exempt from IRB review under 45 CFR 46.101(b) in accordance with the following criteria:

2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

IRB approval is granted with the understanding that the investigator will:

Change neither the procedures nor the consent form without prior IRB review and approval of those changes. (Changes in the approved research may not be initiated without IRB review and approval except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject.) Proposed changes must be submitted to the IRB as a Revision.

- Promptly report any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others to the IRB. (See http://www.northwestern.edu/research/OPRS/irb for additional guidance on reporting of UPIRSOS)

- Submit a continuing review applications 4 - 6 weeks prior to the expiration of IRB approval. If IRB re-approval is not obtained by the expiration date indicated above, all research related activities shall shall stop and no new subjects may be enrolled
(See http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/contrev2002.htm for guidance on continuing subjects when it may be in their best interest to continue reserach participation during a lapse in IRB approval).

For more information regarding OPRS submissions and guidelines, please consult http://www.northwestern.edu/research/OPRS/irb.
This Institution has an approved Federalwide Assurance with the Department of Health and Human Services: FWA00001549.

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY