

**An Ethnographic Study of Private Music Teaching and Learning among  
Taiwanese Canadians in Vancouver, British Columbia**

by

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Bachelor of Music, University of British Columbia, 1999.

Master of Music, Western Washington University, 2001

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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University of Victoria

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**Abstract**

This ethnographic study describes the teaching and learning experiences of private music teachers, students, and students' parents among the Taiwanese Canadian community in Greater Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The following elements are examined in this study: the context of private music lessons of Taiwanese Canadians; the private music teaching and learning experience of Taiwanese Canadians; the cultural beliefs underpinning Taiwanese Canadian private music lessons; and the valuing of private music lessons by Taiwanese Canadians. Five Taiwanese Canadian private music teachers and five of their students and the students' parents living in Greater Vancouver, British Columbia participated in this research. Data were collected through formal and informal interviews and observations of video-recorded lesson.

The findings indicate that the context of Taiwanese Canadian private music lessons is similar to that of the Western private music lessons, a consequence of the emphasis on the talented and Western teaching styles in private and school music education in Taiwan. Cultural values nevertheless have a strong but unacknowledged influence in the private music lessons of Taiwanese Canadians. The Confucian value of obedience to authority and a desire for Western independence are the two seemingly conflicting values that surfaced in the study. Taiwanese Canadians private music teachers teach to remove students' doubts about music. The students, on the other hand, learn to put the skills and knowledge they have acquired during their private music lessons into practice. In addition, parents were involved in the private music lessons through various interactions associated with "*pei*." Engaging their children in private music teaching and learning represents a status symbol for Taiwanese Canadians. Lastly, teaching privately is often a fall back job which provides financial security for private music teachers.

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## Chapter One: Reflections of a Music Talent Progeny

*“Those who forget the lessons of history are condemned to repeat them.”*

George Santanya

Friday, January, 26, 1990

Today was an unhappy day for me. I did not play well on my piano jury. They [the examiners] picked B flat major scale (through a draw) to be the scale for the term. I don't know what happened to me. My classmates before me all played well. But when it was my turn, I screwed up. I couldn't remember the fingering of the B flat major. Oh! I sat on the stage for ages trying to figure out the fingering. People stared at me. The teachers [examiners] must have thought I was stupid. I don't remember how I finished playing the other two pieces. I am a loser. After everyone played, Teacher Tseng [pseudonym] didn't want to speak to me. She said that I had embarrassed her. “How can you forget such a simple task?” she said. “You made me lose face in front of the other teachers!” she said. I was sorry. I didn't want to make her unhappy. If I had practiced more, maybe I would not have forgotten the fingering. I must be a lazy student.

Thursday, March, 22, 1990

I think Teacher Tseng dislikes me. Ever since I played badly on last jury, she started to dislike me. She no longer smiles at me when we have lessons. She rarely talks about how well or badly I play. She just asks me to play over and over. I probably haven't improved since my last jury. I hurt my thumb today. When Mom called Teacher Tseng to cancel the lesson for this week, she said: “If she is this troublesome, I don't think she is suited to learning [music].” Do I really have no talent? Why does she treat other classmates better? She used to like me. She used to talk to me all the time. If she doesn't teach me as she teaches other classmates, how am I going to make it through the next jury? The grand high school entrance examination is coming. I should practice more and get into a good high school so Teacher Tseng will start to like me again.

Monday, June 25, 1990

Teacher Tseng is right! I have no talent. I failed the entrance examination for the junior high school Music Talent Program. I only made it in as an alternate. I am such a loser. I feel sorry. Now no one will like me. I hate music! I am never going to play again!

Sunday, July 1, 1990

Teacher Kuo [pseudonym] took me out for lunch. She said that it was okay to fail something, but I should never give up playing music. Why? Why does everyone else want me to keep playing? Why do I study music? Why should I continue when I am not good at it?

Thursday, October 18, 1990

Junior high school is so much fun. My classmates know that I can play piano and

violin. They wanted me to perform in the school talent show for our class. I have not practiced at all ever since I failed the examination. I called Teacher Kuo to say that I needed to perform and asked her to give me something to play. She seemed happy when she saw me. Teacher Kuo told me that no matter what other people think of me, music would not betray me. She also said that I had potential. Really?! Should I ignore Teacher Tseng's words then?  
(Personal diary, 1990)

The spoken and unspoken thoughts of a teacher can have a serious impact on students. My diary entries were written when I was 12. Even today, I can still remember the pain of feeling abandoned by Teacher Tseng whom I had much admired and trusted. Yet it was other music teachers like Teacher Kuo, who patiently encouraged and nurtured my love of music, who contributed to the musician and person I am today.

I grew up in a middle class family in Taipei, Taiwan. Coming from a farming background, my father built his business from scratch; my mother taught in an elementary school. Being the eldest girl of two in the family, I was taught to aim for traditional Taiwanese society values: being a responsible older sister, an obedient daughter, and a high achiever in school (Brand, 2002).

The school system in Taiwan is divided into four levels: elementary school (Grades 1-6), junior high school (Grades 7-9), senior high school/vocational school (Grade 10-12), and post secondary education. Students have to go through 12 years of compulsory education before they take the Joint University Entrance Examinations (JUEE) (Clark, 2002). Although general music is taught as a mandatory subject during the compulsory school years, music education in the schools is not emphasised due to the competitive nature of JUEE (where there is strong emphasis on “academic” subjects such as mathematics, language arts, and science). Many children study music privately; they either join group music lessons or take individual instrumental lessons outside school. Piano is the instrument most commonly selected. Because Taiwanese parents believe in

the slogan, “Give children a head start,” many children begin their piano lessons in early childhood.

Following this tradition, my mother enrolled me in the Yamaha Junior Music Course (imported from Japan) at age 3. Singing, body movement, aural skills, listening, and keyboard playing were the main features of the curriculum (Miranda, 2000). It was fun to attend these classes. We made music as individuals and as a group. I was excited to go to each session. I was at an age when pressure and fear of failure did not exist.

As the youngest child in the Yamaha class, I was able to keep up with other 5-year-olds. It was at that time that the music teacher told my mother that “your daughter is talented in music.” Since my parents believed that no talent should be wasted, I started taking private piano lessons. No memories of these early piano lessons remain except that my teacher was a young, pretty girl who used to hand out star stickers or candies after lessons.

When I was 6, my mother asked me if I wanted to learn to play the violin. There was a violin teacher who lived in our building; he was also a music teacher in my elementary school and a colleague of my mother’s. During a conversation, my mother told him that I might have potential in music; he suggested that I should start taking violin lessons as soon as possible. Although I had not seen a violin or heard the sound of the violin before, I accepted my mother’s suggestion without hesitation because most Taiwanese 6-year-olds do what their parents ask them to do.

As in other countries, music education is an expensive activity in Taiwan. In the 1980s, many parents considered music an investment for their children. By “investment” I mean that parents conveyed a subtle message that they required something in return from their children. For example, when a child learned an instrument, she/he was

expected to obtain satisfactory grades in music examinations and competitions. If this expectation was not met, the child was considered to have “no talent” in music. Many private music teachers, thus, found it advantageous to prepare their students to fit into the “talented” category (Kennell, 2002; West & Rostvall, 2003). Although my parents did not say so explicitly, their intention to turn me into a musician was obvious, at least to my young mind.

The Taiwanese government established programs for gifted children in 1963 (Ministry of Education, Taiwan, 1999). The picture remains the same today: talent in music, art, dancing, sport, and academics is emphasized (National Education Information Centre, 2003). Special classes in these disciplines are set up in selected elementary and high schools, and children take examinations and audition to enter these programs at age 8 (Grade 3). Most importantly, the government assumes the expense of nurturing these “talented” children.

The reason for me to learn the violin turned out to be so that I would be accepted into the Music Talent Program. My placement was prestigious for my parents because they could afford a “talented” child. My first 2 years of violin lessons were unpleasant. My teacher was the director of the Music Talent Program in my elementary school; he succeeded in entering many of his students into the Music Talent Program and was consequently famous in the music community in Taipei. It seemed, the more he brought students into the Talent Program, the more fame he received. He, therefore, had high expectations of his students. Whenever I played wrong notes or could not memorize a section, my teacher hit me with a long bamboo stick, leaving red whipping marks on my palms. After our lessons, students of the same teacher would gather together and compare who had the most whipping marks; the child with the least whipping marks was

acknowledged to be the favourite student of the day. No parents complained. At the time, hitting was part of teaching in Taiwan.

When I was 8-years old, I was accepted in the Music Talent Class and ranked second in the Taipei district. There was one Music Talent Class for each grade and fewer than twenty-five children per class. Like University music students, we had a music building. Facilities such as practice rooms, a recital hall, an auditorium, and regular classrooms were available at each school. We were expected to double major in two instruments: piano and one orchestral instrument with one private lesson for each major instrument given weekly. Large and small ensembles such as choir, orchestra, and string quartet were mandatory. Music theory, history, and aural skills were also part of the curriculum. Regular academic subjects were provided, but given less emphasis than music. Most of our music teachers were professors from universities or well known musicians.

On school days, the “talented” children practically lived in the music building and rarely talked with regular students or participated in school events with students from regular classes. The regular students saw us as rich brats who were receiving special treatment at school; we did not have to follow the rules and be quiet during nap times because we were practicing our instruments or catching up on our academic work. We never had to volunteer with regular students in national sports events that were hosted in the Taipei Civil Sports Station located opposite our elementary school. Unlike regular students who studied in the hot humid classrooms with only electric fans to blow away the heat during the summer, most of our classrooms and rehearsal practice rooms were air conditioned. Our music tours were also wonderful; we lived in five star hotels, took first class trains and luxury buses for transportation, were able to visit all the fun places around Taiwan, and taste the delicious authentic local food. And of course, it was the



government that covered the majority of our expenses.

Although we were treated like little princes and princesses, school life was stressful. Music was not an aesthetic experience or an expressive outlet; it was a technical goal: we needed to achieve at a high level. We were expected to practice 4 hours per day at age 9 for monthly recitals, year-end juries, and competitions. New repertoire was required for each performance; it would be embarrassing for us to perform the same piece twice in succession. Sometimes we provided propaganda for the government. Performing in front of foreign officials and on the television, we created an image of “super kids” who could play Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 5* by memory.

The atmosphere was highly competitive in Talent classes. Students and parents competed over grades, the amount of time spent practicing, the technical difficulty of the music, the difficulty of pieces learned, and attention from private teachers. In addition, teachers also competed to get the best students in order to increase their personal fame. As a result, the weekly 1-hour lesson soon became insufficient. Parents had to pay for extra lessons outside the school curriculum. The time we spent with our private instrumental teachers was extended to 3 or more hours per week.

It was typical for me to spend Sundays at my violin teacher’s house whenever a major competition was approaching. I practiced, ate, had a lesson, and practiced some more before my mother came to pick me up. Since I spent such a long time with my violin teacher, I was attached to her in many ways. I sought her encouragement and worried about her disapproval and I talked to her about my feelings and everyday experiences. Unlike my piano teacher (Teacher Tseng from the diary), who had a considerable reputation and could offer students more opportunities, my violin teacher was a motherly figure to me.

So I lived under the glory of being a “talented” child from Grade 3 to Grade 6. I was one of the top students in the class. I was chosen to play in competitions; I sang in operas when they needed children singers; I played and sang on TV shows; and I was chosen to go to the national summer camp for “talented” children. Play time was sacrificed. While my brother and cousins were playing outside, I had to stay home and practice. It was a lonely life. Although there were twenty-four other children who endured similar experiences, we developed no personal relationships due to the competitive nature of the group.

Music examinations and auditions were necessary for entrance into the Talent Program in junior high schools (Grade 7). Even though I had high scores in written subjects such as music theory and aural skills, I failed both my violin and piano performance examinations. Here is what happened. The temperature was 34°C outside the examination centre. I was overly confident and did not tune my violin again after I entered the air conditioned room. As a result, the whole performance was ruined by the incorrect intonation. Unfortunately, I was in such a panic after the violin examination that I also failed the piano examination.

Consequently, in spite of my promise (to the parents and teachers), I only made it into the Talent Program as an alternate. Suddenly, I had fallen from the top of the ladder to the bottom. I decided that if I was not good enough for music, then music was not for me. I dropped out of the program and stopped taking both violin and piano lessons for 2 years. Except for the occasional performance in junior high school, I no longer practiced my instruments. My parents had seen my unhappiness over the years in the Talent Program. I was a sad child, rarely smiled in pictures taken at that time, and envied my brother’s freedom to be a child. In addition, I stole money, trying to steer my parents’

attention away from my performance in music. As a result, my parents did not reject my decision to abandon music studies.

During the next 2 years, I went to regular school and had a difficult time catching up with the other students. I had to relearn the academic subjects that had been neglected in the Talent Program. I was okay with language art subjects such as English, Chinese, and social studies because these only required memorization; I was, however, terrible in mathematics and science. I failed most of the tests during the first semester; my grades were always behind those of my classmates. Hating being a loser, I begged my mother to go to cram school, as did most of my classmates. After I spent 2 hours every day for 3 months at cram school after regular school hours, my grades improved tremendously. It was then I started to enjoy my regular school life. I began to work with classmates collaboratively and participated in sports events, science fairs, and all kinds of school festivals. Most important of all, I learned to be “normal.” I was no longer this lonely talented child who spent hours and hours practicing alone; I made friends and I began to smile again.

As previously mentioned, my parents had witnessed my depression in the Talent Program; they tried very hard to find a solution. Between the late 1980s and the beginning of 1990s many Taiwanese people were applying for immigration to other countries. While I was still in the Talent Program, my parents started to feel that maybe a different learning environment could be a solution for my unhappiness; they discussed the matter and consulted with friends who had lived in North America. Nevertheless, they did not act right away; they waited and observed this immigration phenomenon. Then one incident caused my father to apply for immigration.

My mother's brother-in-law was a top official in the police department in Taiwan, leading the clampdown on illegal penny arcades at that time. Most illegal arcades were owned by gangs who were not happy about the disturbance. After several unsuccessful attempts to bribe him, my uncle was shot by gangsters outside my elementary school, near our music building. Everyone in our building heard the sound of shot when it happened. Minutes after the shot, an ambulance siren filled the air, and news crew soon gathered around our school. My uncle was the head-line news for the next couple of days.

This incident was a shock to our family. The gangsters fired shots in broad daylight on the street which my brother and I walked every day. Worried that public security was quickly deteriorating, my father applied for the immigration to Canada. After one and half years, the landing permission arrived.

We came to Canada on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1992. During a prior visit, my parents had bought a house in Coquitlam, BC. My mother quit her teaching job and came here to take care of us alone while my father flew back and forth between Taiwan and Vancouver to support his family. After settling down in our new home, we visited the school board office the next day. There were two junior high schools in my district. With help from a translator, my mother asked the nice lady from the school board which junior high school had a more reputable music program. Even though I had previously decided not to study music again, my parents were secretly hoping that I would slowly rekindle my interest of music if I joined the school music program. Following the school board lady's suggestion, I enrolled in Grade 9 in Dr. Charles Best Junior Secondary School.

The first two months in Canada went by fast. Since I only knew simple English words such as "thank you" and "sorry," I spent most of my school time in the ESL classroom. The only regular classes that I attended were mathematics, choir, and band.

With limited language ability, I had a hard time communicating with others, including my teachers. I mostly joined other ESL (English as Second Language) students who spoke Mandarin. Although I enjoyed school a lot, I felt useless at times; the only times that I felt alive was in the music room.

With the formal musical training I had received in Taiwan, I was more advanced than most of my Canadian classmates in music. I soon became the piano accompanist for the school choir. I began playing solos on every school concert and even played in the pit orchestra with a local theatre company thanks to my school music teacher's referral. It was during these experiences that I started to feel great playing music. Music was no longer a technical activity. It was a way to build up my confidence. It was a way to prove my identity. It was something that made me shine.

While I was busy adjusting to my new school life, my mother was busy finding private music teachers for me. She talked to our realtor, whose children were taking private music lessons. She sought advice from her immigrant friends who had been in Canada for several years. She also asked my school music teacher about where to find private music teachers. Finally, she set up an interview with a violin teacher from the Vancouver Academy of Music. Then she said to me: "I have heard that private music teaching here is very different here from Taiwan. There is a teacher who would like to see you. Do you want to go and meet the teacher?" I was immersed in my glory as an advanced music student at school and did not want to lose this glory. Without hesitation, I agreed to meet the teacher and had my first private music lesson in Canada.

My first violin lesson turned out to be a culture shock. After a limited conversation, a result of my poor English and my teacher's speaking slowly, my teacher demonstrated a piece and asked me what I thought of this music. I was speechless. I didn't know how to

respond, not only because I didn't have enough vocabulary but also because no one had ever asked me about my thoughts before. I was so used to being told that it was a shock when a teacher asked my opinion instead of telling me what to do. It had always been: "Play this loud! You should do this! Prepare that for competition! Play this as I said!" I did not know how to think independently in music. This was the first time I had been shown respect as a student. I was no longer clay in the teacher's hands. I did not have to play music in order to please a teacher. I was learning music for myself, for the first time.

So I resumed private music lessons after I came to Canada. In addition to violin lessons, my mother also found me a piano teacher as well as a teacher for music theory. I started to prepare for the Royal Conservatory of Music examinations. I also joined the Vancouver Academy of Music Symphony Orchestra and a string quartet with other students from the Academy. I was receiving all the proper musical training I did in Taiwan, except this time, I was doing so in my spare time after school.

I decided that I wanted to continue to pursue my earlier childhood dream of being a professional musician by the time I reached Grade 11. Ever since we had immigrated to Canada, my parents had given me the freedom to make decisions about my future. Like my junior high school, the senior high school which I attended (Centennial Senior Secondary High School) was known for its music programs. Besides the regular academic courses taken by every other high school student, I registered in all the available music courses in my school. I played mallet percussion in concert band and was a pianist for jazz band and concert choir. Although I had a high academic performance during my junior and senior high school years, I felt insecure when thinking about other possibilities for career goals. "Music is something that you do best!" I kept telling myself. I was not adventurous; I believed that my ability was limited to music.

Senior high school was busier than I had imagined it would be. My mother did not drive; I had to go everywhere by bus. I spent more than 2 hours commuting to the Vancouver Academy of Music by myself every day after school. It was usually near 9 p.m. by the time I finished all the rehearsals and commuted back home. I could still remember that during snowy icy winter days, with all the music books and school books in my backpack and a violin and viola in each hand, I had to walk back to my house from the bus station. Concerned about my safety, my mother and my younger brother always waited for me at the bus station. Then we walked home together. I always felt relieved when I saw my mother's figure from the bus; I felt as if I had been out fighting all day. My mother represented safety, and there was always hot soup waiting for me when I got home.

After I came home from the Academy, I spent the rest of the night studying English. TOEFL (Test of English as Foreign Language) was required for high school students seeking university admission who had lived in Canada for less than 5 years. TOEFL examinations are held monthly. At first, I studied by myself with all the TOEFL preparation materials which my mother had gathered for me. I took the TOEFL examination every month for 4 months without getting a satisfactory mark. I was desperate to improve my mark so I sought professional help by attending private TOEFL lessons. Although we were still practicing the TOEFL questions from the past examinations as I did by myself, the teacher was able to identify my problems and explained the grammar embedded in the questions. Two months later, I obtained the required score for university admission.

In addition to studying music and improving my English, I had become a private music teacher during my high school years. I began to accept piano students when I was

fourteen. My first students were children of family friends and neighbours. Without prior teaching experience, I basically taught the way I was taught in Taiwan; I took the teaching and practice strategies that I had observed and learned from my teachers and tried to merge these techniques into my own teaching. Looking back, I was brave and naïve at the same time. Teaching, in my view, did not require too much thinking: the purpose of my teaching was to let my students enjoy music.

After high school, I enrolled in the University of British Columbia as a music student majoring in violin. I moved to the university dormitory and enjoyed my independence. I was actively involved in various student clubs, preparing food and music for club events. I was also the founder and a conductor of a choir which sang mostly arrangements of pop songs.

Despite all the extra curricular activities, I still had to fulfill my duty as a student. Courses such as music history, music theory, large and small ensembles, and weekly private music lessons were mandatory for music students. In addition, we also needed to take non-music electives such as English and Mathematics. Nevertheless, my music learning especially on violin was put on a hold for my first two years at university.

Because of policies and political struggles between faculty members (as I recall the events), the violin teacher with whom I intended to study was replaced by another teacher. After one year, I was switched to yet another teacher. While these two teachers were great performers, I always felt they did not provide me with the help I needed. The result was that I did not progress during these 2 years. I was frustrated when I saw other classmates advancing. I thought that perhaps the reason I was not progressing as I had hoped was that I was not practicing enough. As a result of over practicing, I injured myself and could not hold my bow at the year-end jury in my sophomore year.



Fortunately, I was switched again to another teacher in my third year, this time, to the teacher that I had wanted to study with all along. She was a great performer but she was also a teacher. We began by fixing my posture so I no longer felt pain when playing. Little by little, I progressed. My technique improved; my interpretation improved; and I learned to listen to the different tones I was producing. I felt successful once again. This teacher stayed with me for the last 2 years of my program. I was able to hold a recital by the end of year 3 and was accepted in a graduate program in music performance. During the last two years of my undergraduate program I also began a career as a pop song and jingle writer.

I attended Western Washington University in the United States for my Master of Music degree to study with a violin teacher of my choice who subsequently improved my performance ability. It was an enjoyable 2 years. To supplement my income, I taught piano classes to first-year music students with no keyboard experience; in addition, I taught basic technique such as scales, arpeggios, and chords to first-year music theory classes. I participated in violin competitions and performed extensively with the university Collegium Musicum (a Baroque music ensemble) that even toured around Europe in the summer of 2000. I continued writing popular songs and jingles and also performed regularly with a group of friends at weddings and social events.

Meanwhile, I was still a private music teacher during my university years. Even though I lived on campus as an undergraduate student, I returned home to teach on weekends. Since Western Washington University is situated just south of the Canadian border, as a graduate student I commuted from Vancouver for classes and was able to continue giving lessons on weekends. Despite the fact that I was training to be a performer and was happy sharing my music with other people through composing and

performing, I now saw myself primarily as a teacher rather than a performer. I felt that I would not be a successful performer because I did not enjoy the requisite long hours of solitary practice, preferring instead to interact with people on a daily basis.

Over the course of recent online discussions with former classmates from the Music Talent Program, I discovered that, like me, most of them had majored in music performance in undergraduate and graduate programs. Most of my classmates are in music-related professions. They are performers, school music teachers, or private music teachers like me. My personality must be such that I get along with children very well. I have never had to worry about not getting enough students over my teaching career. At first, private music teaching was a part time job that provided a decent income. My passion for private music teaching, however, grew as my teaching experience accumulated. I was no longer a naïve and brave student teacher. I began to doubt my own teaching. I started to ask questions about my teaching and I was always thirsty for answers.

As a Taiwanese Canadian private music teacher, I have felt isolated at times. My performance background did not help me much in terms of finding answers about teaching and learning. Even though I was educated in a Western educational system, my world mainly revolved around the Taiwanese Canadian community. When I talked with my Taiwanese Canadian colleagues who were teaching music privately, we did not discuss our work in detail because it is rude to ask questions about one's job in our culture. Having no other way to turn, I entered the doctoral program at the University of Victoria, hoping to find answers that I could not find elsewhere.

My first couple of years in the Ph.D. program were difficult: I did not know how to write an academic paper in English and I had no knowledge about research. As a

performer, what I do best is practice my repertoire thoroughly and perform well. I never had to read so much literature or speak in front of classmates. Worst of all, I did not know how to think independently. As a product of Taiwanese culture, I was used to being told what to do. Although I had become a more independent musician since I came to Canada, I was still holding on to traditional Taiwanese values in my academic learning. Obeying or agreeing with what the teacher says was the simplest way to survive in school. It was how I survived high school, university, and the master's program. However, obeying did not work in the Ph.D. program. I was expected to think critically and think more deeply about my experiences and the world in which I live. The years of the Ph.D. program not only helped me know more about teaching and learning but also have helped me understand myself. My past experiences are what have shaped me into who I am today. The deeper my self-understanding became, the more curious I became about the lives of other Taiwanese Canadians music teachers, students, and students' parents. Do we share similar experiences? Does the information I encountered in my literature review apply to this specific cultural group? How are we different?

With the above inquiries, I began my journey of exploring the world of private music teaching in the Taiwanese Canadian community in Vancouver, British Columbia.

## Chapter Two: Beginning the Inquiry

*“The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity.”*  
Albert Einstein

This study arose from reflections on my experiences as a private music student and, more recently, private music teacher. As explained earlier, I am a Taiwanese Canadian who has been educated in Vancouver, British Columbia over the past 12 years but I received my primary education and early musical training in Taiwan.

### Background

While I was a private music student, I was strongly influenced by my teachers in matters of music preference, performance technique, playing style, attitudes towards learning, and, implicitly, teaching philosophy. Since becoming a private music teacher, I have found that the world of private music teaching is complex yet fascinating because it involves music, the art of teaching and learning, and also interaction with others. When I began to think about my own teaching, I realized that my practice was based on my past experience and tradition: I was teaching by rote. I had no deep understanding of pedagogy or of my own teaching. I had also been immersed from an early age in the music and assumptions of the Western canon (Citron, 1993; Jørgensen, 2001). How did this immersion influence my view of my native Taiwanese culture? How has it impacted on my teaching?

As a Taiwanese Canadian who was educated in both Taiwanese and North American cultures, I not only respected the traditional values of the Taiwanese collectivism (i.e., reciprocity, obligation, duty, security, tradition, dependence, harmony, obedience to

authority, and equilibrium) but also tried to accommodate the Western individualistic style (i.e., creativity, bravery, self-reliance, and solitude) (Brand, 2002). As a Taiwanese Canadian who has learned and taught Western classical music, I have experienced two very different teaching approaches. The Taiwanese educational approach is influenced by the Confucian thinking where high value is placed on academic achievement, family honor, self-improvement, and self-esteem (Brand, 2002; Ho & Law, 2002; Ku, 1984). Teachers represent authority, with students dependent on their teachers (Ku, 1984). The Canadian (Western) educational approach, however, embraces self reliance, individual needs, and equity (Brand, 2002; Ziegahn, 2001), where teachers serve as a guide for students (Ziegahn, 2001). I find that my teaching style now merges some aspects of both these cultures. For example, I teach in both English and Mandarin. I listen to students' opinions but also give orders. I am a professional figure to parents but a friend to students. I believe in promoting self-motivation for children but I also agree that discipline must be established by teachers and parents. I teach both Western classical repertoire and works by Taiwanese composers. Furthermore, I try to persuade the parents of my students that learning music can be enjoyable and that every child can learn music, unlike the more talent-driven approach I experienced in Taiwan. I had never questioned the influences from the two cultures until now. Adjusting to the values of the two cultures had not been difficult for me; I considered the adjustment a subtle process of adaptation needed for survival. However, I have Taiwanese Canadian students, born and educated in Canada, who came to study with me because they could not adjust to their previous private music teachers. Their parents claimed that the pressures from the teachers and the music examinations reduced their motivation to learn. On the other hand, there were new immigrant parents who switched their children to other teachers because I was too

“relaxed” and did not push students enough. These decisions got me thinking.

How do all these seemingly contradictory values affect the private music teaching experiences of other Taiwanese Canadian? Which values do these teachers communicate to their students in order to promote learning? According to Kennell (2002), we tend to teach the way we were taught. Do my Taiwanese colleagues notice any difference between the way they were taught music and their own ways of teaching? What kinds of experiences do Taiwanese Canadian students have in their private music lessons? Why do they start, continue to, or stop taking lessons? How do they practice? What genres of music do they prefer? How do they communicate with their teachers? What is the influence of culture on their learning? Moreover, how are Taiwanese Canadian parents whose children are taking private music lessons involved in lessons and practice sessions? Is there a cultural tension between Taiwanese and Canadian values in private music teaching and learning? If so, how is this tension resolved? My research was directed at acquiring a deeper understanding of the culture of private music teaching in general and, more specifically, the interplay of Taiwanese and Canadian cultural expectations and beliefs.

### **Rationale for Research**

Many aspects of music teaching and learning as well as how music education may have an impact on human development are areas that have been investigated by researchers in music education (cf. Colwell & Richardson, 2002; Green, 1997; Hanley & Goolsby, 2002; Hargreaves, 1986; Parncutt & McPherson, 2002). Research topics in music education as a broad field of study show a concern for relationships and teaching strategies as the following summary demonstrates:

### Relationships —

- overviews of private music teaching (Duke, Flowers & Wolfe, 1997; Duke, 1999; Gholson, 1998; Kennell, 2002; Pitts, Davidson, & McPherson, 2000b; Ward, 2004);
- the apprenticeship (expert-novice) model (Colprit, 2000; Duke, Flowers, & Wolf, 1997; Kennell, 2002; Wiggins, 2001; Young, Burwell, & Pickup, 2003);
- the dyadic teacher/student relationship compared to that of the parent/child (Davidson, Sloboda, & Howe, 1996; Kennell, 2002);
- teacher/student interaction (Benson & Fung, 2004; Duke & Simmons, 2006; Siebenaler, 1997; Speer, 1994; Tsai, 2000; West & Rostvall, 2003);
- student motivation and satisfaction in private music lessons (Cooper, 2001; Costa-Giomi, 2004; Costa-Giomi, Flowers, & Sasaki, 2005; Duke et al, 1997; Hallam, 2002; Marjoribanks & Mboya, 2004; McPherson & McCormick, 2000; Persson, 1995; Pitts, Davidson, & McPherson, 2000b; Rife, Shnek, Lauby, & Lapidus, 2001; Smith, 2005; Williams, 2002);
- parental involvement (Davidson, Sloboda, & Howe, 1996; Duke et al, 1997; Macmillan, 2004; McPherson & Davidson, 2002; Pitts, Davidson, & McPherson 2000a; Pitts et al., 2000b);

### Teaching strategies—

- the Suzuki Method (Colprit, 2000; Duke, 1999);
- teaching effectiveness (Costa-Giomi, et al., 2005; Davidson, Moore, Sloboda, & Howe, 1998; Duke, 2000; Gillespie, 1991; Gholson, 1998; Hamann, Baker, McAllister, & Bauer, 2000; Hamann, Lineburgh, & Paul, 1998; Ward, 2004);
- scaffolding theory (Gholson, 1998; Kennell, 1998, 2002; Wiggins, 2001);
- students' practicing (Coffman, 1990; Jørgensen, 2002; Kostka, 2002; Maynard, 2006; McPherson & Davidson, 2002; McPherson & Renwick, 2001; Nielsen, 2001; Pitts et al., 2000a; Smith, 2005).

Most of the research in studio music has focused on specific aspects of private teaching and used quantitative methodology. Many studies used college music students as participants; only a few looked at private music experiences from the perspectives of young children and their teachers (Colprit, 2000; Davidson, et al., 1998; Duke, 1999; Duke et al, 1997; Pitts et al., 2000b; Rife et al, 2001). None examined cultural parameters, assuming a Western approach to music education.

It is only recently that researchers have started to take an interest in private music education. Compared to the abundant research in general school music education, only limited systematic research has been undertaken in individualized music teaching. The main roles involved in private music lessons are those of teacher, student, and parent. These three roles form a triad in which the participants interact and influence each other.

Most of the studies isolated the roles of either teachers, students, or parents (Colprit, 2000; Davidson et al., 1996; Davidson, et al., 1998). Only one study investigated the interactions between all three roles in private music lessons (Duke et al, 1997). Interaction refers to the reciprocal connections among individuals involved in a social situation (Hanks, Long, & Urdang, 1986). In order to get a holistic picture of what happens in private music lessons, it will be necessary to examine all three roles and their interaction.

According to symbolic interactionists, humans make meaning based on the environment around them (Schwandt, 1994). These meanings are derived from social interaction and communication among individuals. Communication and interaction such as language, media, text, and non-verbal cues are symbols, and meanings are developed from these symbols through individual interpretive processes. Schwandt suggests that human beings do not discover knowledge and meaning; they build concepts, schemes, and models to make sense of experience and arrive at meanings through construction and interpretation. Because each person will have a different way of constructing and interpreting meaning, meanings or realities are multiple and subjective (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The best way to uncover these multiple realities is through qualitative research. Because I wanted to construct a meaningful understanding of the world of private music lessons, I selected a qualitative methodology.

Unfortunately, no research that I have located has involved the private music teaching and learning of Taiwanese people in Canada. After consulting with my Canadian Taiwanese colleagues in the Vancouver area, I concluded that students of Taiwanese Canadian teachers are most likely also Taiwanese. According to a reply from the Republic of China Taipei Cultural and Economic Office, Vancouver, in 2003 there were



around 70,000 Taiwanese immigrants in Greater Vancouver (Republic of China Taipei Cultural and Economic Office, personal communication, October 17, 2003). Although there are no statistics indicating how many Taiwanese children in this community are studying music, many children are involved in studio music studies. I have located no studies on the musical learning of Taiwanese immigrant children in Canada. No studies looked at the teaching practice of Taiwanese Canadian private music teachers. Only one study examined the different perspectives of private music teachers, students, and parents to paint a picture of private music teaching as a whole (Duke et al, 1997), but without cultural considerations. Moreover, I only found one qualitative research which presents and describes private music teaching and learning as a culture (Nerland, 2007).

Culture is “an invisible web of behaviors, patterns, rules, and rituals of a group of people who have contact with one another and share common languages” (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2002, p. 3). Spradley (1980) focused more on human agency in defining culture as “the acquired knowledge people use to interpret experience and generate behavior” (p. 6). Studying what people do, what people know, and the things people make and use provide us with an understanding of people’s lived experiences. Private music teaching is a culture within larger cultures. Taiwanese Canadians form yet another culture. Since I was seeking an understanding of human experiences in two cultures, it was essential to conduct in-depth qualitative research to describe and reveal what was actually happening in private music lessons. Ethnography was the qualitative method most useful for investigating cultures.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to describe the private music teaching and learning culture of five Taiwanese Canadian teachers and five of their Taiwanese Canadian students and parents. All were residents of Greater Vancouver, British Columbia. Although Spradley (1980) wrote that when doing participant observation, “both questions and answers must be discovered in the social situation being studied” (p. 32), I developed research questions based on the literature to guide me initially. My interest revolved around the following questions:

1. What are the cultural beliefs underpinning private music lessons for Taiwanese Canadians?
2. What kinds of teaching and learning experiences occur in Canadian Taiwanese private music lessons?
3. What is the context of the private music lessons of Taiwanese Canadians?
4. How do Taiwanese Canadians value private music lessons?

## **Limitations**

The findings from this study were limited to the Taiwanese Canadian living in Greater Vancouver, BC. They do not represent Taiwanese Canadian populations in other areas of Canada. My volunteer participants were teaching and learning piano and music theory. Therefore, my findings are limited to these two aspects of studio music lessons. Although similarities might emerge, my findings do not apply to other instruments.

The next chapters are organized as follows: Chapter 3 presents a review of the literature. Chapter 4 explains the methodology and the procedures applied in this study. Chapters 5 to 9 are the descriptive stories of the Taiwanese Canadians teachers, students, and parents. Chapter 10 is the analytical chapter which presents the findings and a discussion of the findings. Finally, Chapter 11 addresses the issues that arise from the study as well as suggestions for future research.

### **Chapter Three: The Wisdom of Others**

*“Within this simple expert-novice dyad is a complex world of human cultural evolution, including the use of language, symbol systems, tools, and many aspects of human psychology.” (Kennell, 2002, p. 243)*

This chapter presents a review of the literature that looks at topics relevant to private music instruction and cultural issues related to Taiwanese Canadians. The issues discussed in this chapter revolve around the following questions: What is the context of private music lessons? What are the teaching and the learning experience of private music lessons? What values do people attribute to private music lessons? Since limited research has been done regarding private music teaching in comparison to the vast research on school music education, this review addresses related issues in education and music education. Cultural values and gender differences are also examined in the last part of the review.

The review is divided into three parts: 1. an exploration of the world of private music teaching; 2. a review of the research about teaching and learning in private music studios; and 3. a discussion of cultural and gender issues.

#### **The World of Private Music Lessons**

The world of private music lessons involves three groups: students, parents, and teachers, each with specific roles or functions. These three groups interact with each other in private music teaching. In this section, I begin by exploring the field of private music teaching and discussing various issues that emanate from the roles played by each group.

## **Private Music Teaching**

“I am taking piano lessons.” “My son has music tutoring this afternoon.” “I am a studio music teacher.” These statements express the three perspectives of private music instruction — those of the student, the parent, and the teacher, although the parent is peripheral to the expert-novice dyad during the actual lesson. Each perspective represents distinct points-of-view.

Private teaching has many designations, including private music instruction or teaching, studio music instruction or teaching, applied music instruction or teaching, private studio instruction or teaching, instrumental or voice instruction or teaching, private music education, music mentoring, and music tutoring (Duke et al., 1997; Gholson, 1998; Kennell, 2002). More recently, the broader designation of music education has also been used to refer to private music lessons. In this study I will use private music teaching or instruction, private music lessons, instrumental and vocal instruction or teaching, and studio music teaching or instruction interchangeably to refer to studio music lessons. Private music teaching is a practice associated with the teaching of instruments, voice, and music theory (including theory, analysis, history, and counterpoint).

The typical one-on-one dyad in private music teaching usually consists of an experienced teacher and a novice learner. The model can also be extended to refer to a small group of students learning from a master teacher in a private setting such as a home studio, an office in a music conservatory, or any suitable location. The latter type of music teaching exists in oral cultures around the world.

In Western cultures, the history of private music teaching has its roots in ancient Greek and Roman times. Private instruction was the only method of teaching

instrumental music at that time. Today, in Africa, Eastern Europe, and Asian countries (China, India, Thailand, and Japan), traditional and folk music are often inherited and passed on through private music instruction, whether formal or informal (Campbell, 1991).

In the West, musical communities can be divided into the following: scholars, performers, teachers, critics, and listeners (now often called consumers). Although some music scholars are also virtuosic performers, those in the discipline of music seek for greater truth, knowledge, and understanding of music and those who are music education researchers seek to a greater understanding of pedagogical issues whereas performers care more about the artistic and technical aspects of music. Private music lessons are mostly delivered by teachers who have performance backgrounds (Campbell, 1991; Kennell, 2002; Nettl, 2002). Generally, people seem to assume that instrumental or vocal instruction is one of a performing musician's responsibilities, whether or not he or she has received any preparation for teaching. While there has been a concerted attempt to study school music teaching, in spite of its long and venerable history, research on private music teaching has not been undertaken until recently. This teaching has, indeed, been private. Limited research has been conducted (Campbell, 1991; Duke et al., 1997; Kennell, 2002).

**Apprenticeship.** As mentioned before, applied music teaching is a dyad relationship developed between an expert and a novice. Researchers have described this experienced musician and novice learner relationship as a form of apprenticeship (Duke et al., 1997; Jørgensen, 2002; Kennell, 2002; Young, et al., 2003). Apprenticeship involves a student who follows or works for a knowledgeable person in a profession or trade to acquire the

necessary skills of that profession over a certain period of time (Apprenticeship, n.d.; Hanks et al., 1986).

According to psychologist Howard Gardner (1991), apprenticeship was originally modeled on parent-child or elder siblings/younger siblings' relationships. By listening to and observing elders as they undertake their daily routines, children learn how to become competent in their daily lives. This older-younger relationship later shifted to an expert (master)-novice (disciple) apprenticeship:

The core idea of an apprenticeship is that a young person goes to work for, and often to live with, an adult expert in a trade or vocation. Typically the young person has no biological relation to the master, although there may well be informal familial links, and typically the arrangement has a legal or quasi-legal status.... Much of the learning is observational.... The master will occasionally point out errors or make special demonstrations, and the apprentice is also expected to use his own emerging critical capacities to correct and improve his performance. (pp. 121-122)

The apprenticeship model is widely applied in various fields. Business companies use apprenticeship to train new workers. Restaurants use apprenticeship to nurture young chefs. And the relationship between supervisors and graduate students in universities is yet another form of apprenticeship (Apprenticeship, n.d.).

Private music teaching is similar to the apprenticeship model in that a student takes instrumental/voice lesson from a master teacher (Campbell, 1991; Duke et al., 1997; Kennel, 2002; Young et al., 2003). The teacher provides verbal instruction and demonstrates musical passages while the student learns by observing and listening. A student is expected to practice and improve both his technical abilities and musical sensitivities on his own time.

Private music teachers not only teach their students how to produce sounds on an instrument but can also impact on students' musical interests as well as their feelings of self efficacy and their motivation. Kennel (2002) agrees that the teacher-student relationship in private music teaching is also comparable to the parent-child relationship.

It is not hard to find resemblances between private music teaching and apprenticeships. Whether in apprenticeships or private music teaching, it is people who weave relationships; it is in the roles of students, parents, and teachers and their interactions that an understanding of private music teaching must be sought. I begin with music students — the first important group in private music teaching.

### **Music Students**

What do we know about children who take private music lessons? According to a 1994 survey by the American Music Conference, there were approximately three million American children (age 5-19) taking private music lessons with an independent teacher (Williams, 2002). Although more than a decade old, this figure indicates that there is a large number of children taking private music lessons. The mean duration for a student's stay with one piano teacher is 4.9 years. Students usually switch teachers two or three times before they stop taking lessons (Duke et al., 1997). Canadian figures are not yet available. There are, however, a large number of private music teachers listed in the Registered Music Teachers' Association for each Canadian province, and there are many additional private music teachers who are not members. As the number of the private music teachers is high, I might conclude logically that the number of children taking private music lessons is also great.

Jørgensen (2001) explored when children start taking private music lessons. He found that the mean ages for starting instrumental and vocal lessons were: 7.8 years old for piano, 9.9 years old for strings, 11.6 years old for brass, 12.8 years old for woodwinds, and 12.9 years old for voice and other instruments. Jørgensen concluded that the earlier a child begins learning an instrument, the more likely he/she will become a professional

musician. Parental support and approach to practicing were, however, also influential contributors to children's later success.

Several researchers identified common characteristics among people who take studio music lessons. Most of the research refers to piano lessons. For example, Duke et al. (1997) suggested that children who take piano lessons are often viewed by the society as “smart, hard-working, energetic, and outgoing” (p. 58). The attitude of children who take piano lessons towards academic performance in school is generally positive. Cooper (2001) said that people who studied piano as adults also described themselves as “smart, disciplined, hard-working, and helpful” (p. 161). Although it is helpful for music teachers to know the personal characteristics of private music students and this knowledge could impact on student learning, student motivation actually plays a vital role in the whole learning process.

**Motivation.** What makes students commit to long hours of individual practice? Motivation plays a significant role in student learning. Motivation can be categorized as intrinsic and extrinsic. According to Hallam (2002), intrinsic motivation is the “innate, organismic need for competence and self-determination” (p. 228) whereas extrinsic motivation “occurs when a task is undertaken for external reward” (p. 228). The enjoyment of music, feelings of satisfaction, and the desire to learn are examples of intrinsic motivation (Pitts et al., 2000b; Rife et al., 2001). Personality traits such as extroversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness also contribute to intrinsic motivation (Hallam, 2002). On the other hand, environmental influences (teacher characteristics, rewards and punishments, quality of instruction, being with friends, parental encouragement and support, comfort, security, and content of curriculum) are the extrinsic factors that promote or destroy a student's motivation to practice and learn



(Barry & McArthur, 1994; Davidson et al., 1996; Gembris & Davidson, 2002; Hallam, 2002; McPherson & Renwick, 2001).

According to Hallam (2002), motivation is reinforced by a need for achievement and competence. The purpose of motivation is for the person to achieve success and to avoid failure. Many motivation theorists state that intrinsic motivation is key to engaging in the best learning behaviors. For example, Stipek (1988) adds that external reinforcement such as encouragement, peer influence, and rewards might not necessarily achieve the best learning results because they are not always available. How does intrinsic motivation affect children's musical learning?

Attributions of success and failure have an important impact on intrinsic motivation. Looking at the causal attribution of elementary school and high school students, Legette (1998) found that musical ability and effort are the leading causal attributions for success or failure in music studies. After many studies, Dweck (2000) concluded that students who attribute success or failure to effort (environmental motivation) are more consistent when developing self-esteem than those who attribute results to innate ability (entity motivation).

C.P. Schmidt (2005) examined the relations among motivation, performance achievement, and music experience in secondary instrumental music students. He found that instrumental students tended to attribute their success to intrinsic or cooperative aspects rather than extrinsic or competitive aspects. Schmidt also discovered that older students tended to attribute their achievement to intrinsic or mastery orientations while younger students reported that their success was related to competitive, ego, and failure avoidance orientations.

Besides attribution, another vital part of motivation is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy addresses how well people think they will be able to carry a task when approaching it (Hallam, 2002). Children's beliefs about themselves are connected to particular tasks and their previous experiences of successes and failures of those tasks. According to Bandura (1989), motivation for learning increases when strong self-efficacy beliefs are presented. In addition, a feeling of being competent is also part of the self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the required condition for building intrinsic motivation (Hallam, 2002).

Music teachers and parents often ponder why their students/children start, stop, or continue taking music lessons. When looking at why children start taking music lessons, Duke et al. (1997) mentioned that children start piano lessons either because parents decide that it is time for lessons or children just want to play as a result of other incentives such as peer pressure and role models. In contrast, Campbell (1991) wrote that avocational interests and professional goals are the two main reasons for starting music lessons. The latter reasons may be better applied to adults. Cooper (2001) looked at adults' perception of piano study and concluded that for adults, skill development and personal pleasure are the major reasons for taking lessons.

When asking children why they stopped taking lessons, Duke et al. (1997) discovered the following reasons: there are more important things to do than music; students are independent enough to play what they want; and they have lost interest. Williams (2002) claims that older students tend to have a higher dropout rate than younger students. He concluded that a difficulty in balancing participation in both sports and music and a fear of being in the competitive world of music performance are both factors in students' decisions to stop taking lessons. Furthermore, children/teenagers often seek to fulfill the expectations of teachers and parents (Brand, 2002; Jordan-Decarbo &

Nelson, 2002; O'Neill & McPherson, 2002; Persson, 1995). Fear of not living up to the expectations of teachers and parents is yet another factor in teenagers' decisions to stop taking lessons (Williams, 2002).

Certain behaviors seem to be present in children who drop out of private lessons. Costa-Giomi et al. (2005) observed 28 children's piano lessons for three years to examine how teacher and student behavior, lesson progress, and pedagogy connect to beginning students' commitment to lessons. They found that "fewer approvals, more teacher cues, a lower percentage of progress-forward intervals, and lower examination score could have served as indicators of students' decisions to eventually drop out of the lessons" (p. 24).

Several studies examined why children continue to participate in music lessons. Orsmond and Miller (1999) indicated that preschool children who take music lessons may be a select group; most of them have prior musical experiences such as going to concerts and are most likely to be involved in other extracurricular activities such as sports. They concluded that parental involvement, multiple extra-curricular activities, and individual musical experiences are factors in children's willingness to participate in music lessons.

Looking at why students start and continue with studio lessons, Davidson (1999) suggested that previous exposure to music such as listening to music, parental influences, exposure to musical performance, and individual characteristics all contribute to children's persistence in taking music lessons. Furthermore, Davidson et al. (1996) indicated that the initial motivation of children who continue to take lessons was provided externally by parents. As they got older, however, the students' motivation became intrinsic and self-sustaining. On the other hand, children who stopped playing

initially received less extrinsic motivation and, as a result, developed little intrinsic motivation to engage in musical learning.

Pitts et al. (2000b) studied the motivation that leads to success and failure in the instrumental learning of young players. They found that children's commitment plays a critical factor in their instrumental learning. After the first 20 months of learning, children who continued to have interest and enthusiasm in learning displayed a strong commitment to their lessons. Although extrinsic motivations such as getting satisfying marks on examinations and the use of rewards for practicing were present in these children's lessons, personal interest in music learning was the foundation for them to continue with lessons. On the other hand, children who stopped having lessons after the first 20 months relied entirely on external motivation factors such as peer influence and other social factors. Because the intrinsic motivation was not developed for these children, their desire to learn faded as external motivational factors diminished. To conclude, Pitts et al. suggested that a supportive home environment and the development of consistent self-motivation are key components in children's continuing to take lessons.

Children's expectancy and value beliefs about instrumental learning are other elements of motivation. McPherson (2001) conducted a 3-year project studying the factors contributing to achievement during the early stages of learning a musical instrument for children ages 7 to 9. He found that there is a strong relationship between children's perception of how long they thought it would take them to learn their instruments before they began their lessons, their valuing of their lessons, and their actual achievement. Children who initially showed long-term commitment in their musical learning obtained higher scores in the Watkins Farnum Performance Scale (WFPS, a standardized sight-reading test) while children who expressed short-term commitment in

their musical learning had lower scores in the WFPS. McPherson further concluded that “children were able to indicate how long they thought they would learn their instrument and this aspect of their initial motivation interacted with their practice to produce significant gains in achievement after the first nine months of learning” (p. 126).

Students’ goal orientation towards musical practice is yet another factor affecting their motivation. Smith (2005) examined goal orientations in the instrumental music practice of 344 university students. He found that task orientations are positively related to practice factors while ego-approach and ego-avoidance goals are negatively related to practicing. In other words, if students’ goals for musical learning are for extrinsic reasons such as winning a competition or avoiding ridicule, they will be more likely to be “turned off” from their musical learning than those who are motivated by intrinsic tasks.

To sum up, both intrinsic (self-determination) and extrinsic (external rewards and influences) motivations are important to student learning in private music lessons depending on age and experience level. As Rife et al. (2001) mentioned,

without [intrinsic] motivators such as feeling good and having fun, enjoying practicing and improving, liking the challenge of their lessons, [and extrinsic motivators such as] liking their music teacher, and encouragement from parents and friends, it is unlikely that children would continue to participate in private music lessons. (p. 29)

**Practicing.** Besides learning in private music lessons, students learn by practicing on their own between lessons: “Practising is a skill to be learned, just as other technical and musical skills require effort and concentration for mastery, and to view practice as simply a means to an end is to overlook its complexity” (Pitts et al., 2000a, p. 46). Maynard (2006) further defined practicing as “the act of repeating a motor skill with the intention that repetition of the skill will lead to increased accuracy, fluency, velocity, consistency, automaticity, and flexibility in performing the skill” (p. 61).

Although teachers tend to view practicing as the child's responsibility and hope that progress will be made between lessons, children do not usually have a positive view about practicing. The latter is often treated as a chore (McPherson & Renwick, 2001; Pitts et al., 2000a). Duke et al. (1997) wrote that most children do not need reminders to do their homework yet they need reminders to practice music. However, practicing must be enjoyable if children are to experience musical development and satisfaction (Pitts et al., 2000a).

Some studies examine a commonsense belief that the more time spent practicing, the better one becomes (Coffman, 1990; Hallam, 1998b; Hallam, 2001; Jørgensen, 2002). Nevertheless, studio music teachers often expect and assume more practice time from students than students actually invest (Coffman, 1990). Time spent learning is, indeed, an important factor for advancing the level of musical expertise (Hallam, 1998b; 2001). Hallam (2001) and Jørgensen (2002) found a positive relationship between the amount of the time spent practicing and instrumental achievement. On the other hand, increased practice time does not necessarily result in improvement (Barry & McArthur, 1994; Duke et al., 1997); the quality of practice time is far more important than the time spent (Hallam, 2001; Jørgensen, 2002).

There are three types of practicing: physical motor skill acquisition (e.g., playing to get the right fingerings or fast passages), mental/cognitive practice (e.g., running the notes and the fingerings in the head), and alternating physical/mental practice (Barry & McArthur, 1994; Coffman, 1990). Coffman (1990) claims that mental practice alone is better than no practice and that combining mental practice with physical practice does not have much better results than physical practice alone. Since instrumental practice is an activity that involves both spatial movement and thinking, thoughtful practice promotes

successful learning outcomes (McPherson & McCormick, 2000; McPherson & Renwick, 2001; Pitts et al., 2000a; Smith, 2005). McPherson and Renwick (2001) think that “deliberate practice” (also called relevant practice /quality of practice /efficiency of practice) is the critical process for effective learning outcomes. Deliberate practice is “a term used to describe goal-oriented, structured and effortful facets of practice in which motivation, resources and attention determine the amount and quality of practice undertaken” (p. 169). According to Jørgensen (2002), deliberate practice is the main route for progressing from novice to expert.

Self regulation is another element for effective practicing. Self-regulated individuals are cognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally involved in their own learning through strategy selection, monitoring, and revision. Self regulators are more likely to have long-term practice and sub practice goals. They usually select practice strategies according to their goals. Self instruction and self guidance are the most common strategies for self regulators (Nielsen, 2001). Furthermore, self reflection, self awareness, and self evaluation are the three other features that lead to successful practicing (Pitts et al., 2000a).

When asked how students practice, Hallam (2001) suggested that, for young children, the aim of practice seems to be playing the notes correctly. Students tend to follow a routine of scales, exercises, and repertoire in their practice schedule (Duke et al., 1997; McPherson & Davidson, 2002). Repetition or playing through is another common strategy (Hallam, 2001; Pitts et al., 2000a). Most young children practice by playing the pieces through without other strategies such as breaking the piece into smaller sections or playing with separate hands (when practicing piano). Young children take years to

formulate their own practice strategies as part of their self-regulation development (McPherson & Davidson, 2002; McPherson & Renwick, 2001).

Hallam (2001) believes that planning for practicing is what differentiates novice and expert players. Novice players often repeat a piece as a whole while expert players apply more cognitive strategies such as emphasizing difficult segments while practicing. Also, students may know about practice strategies but not necessarily use them. It is the teacher's responsibility to guide students to practice effectively. It is interesting that teachers claim they always talk to their students about how and what to practice while most students feel that their teachers rarely talk to them about the topic, a point supported by Barry and McArthur (1994), Jørgensen (2000), and Kostka (2002).

Using the Music Practice Instruction Inventory to investigate 94 members of the Music Teachers National Association in the United States, Barry and McArthur (1994) found that there was no consistency between teachers' approaches to practice and the literature. The practice strategies of college teachers were often different from those of the teachers of pre-college students. Applied music teachers in colleges seemed to assume that their students already knew how to practice, whereas pre-college teachers tended to teach their students to begin a piece slowly then increase the tempo. Regulated practice schedules and practice time records were two common strategies teachers used with younger students (Duke et al., 1997). Furthermore, Smith (2005) believe that practice strategies should be taught in a sequence: "begin by addressing the initial challenges of learning the musical and motor aspects of a piece, and progress to the polishing, memorizing, interpreting, and performing of that piece" (p. 49).



It is interesting to note that literature related to practicing emphasizes how students practice rather than how to teach students how to practice. Pedagogy seems to be based more on tradition and personal experience than on research.

**Music Conservatories.** The most common way of externally assessing students' instrumental achievement and awarding levels of excellence in private music teaching and learning is through music examinations organized and run by music conservatories (Davidson & Scutt, 1999; McPherson & McCormick, 2000). Music examinations often serve as a motivational goal for students taking private lessons (Davidson & Scutt, 1999; McCormick & McPherson, 2003; McPherson & McCormick, 2000). The organizations providing this service in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada are: the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, 2010), the British Columbia Conservatory of Music (British Columbia Conservatory of Music, 2010), Conservatory Canada (Conservatory Canada, 2010), the Royal Conservatory of Music (Royal Conservatory of Music Examinations, 2009), and Trinity Guildhall (Trinity Guildhall, 2010).

Like McPherson and McCormick (2000) in their study of motivational factors in a music examination, I found the programs offered by the conservatories listed above to be similar. That is, students are required to perform prepared repertoire (with piano accompaniment for non-piano instruments) and technical requirements such as etudes, scales, arpeggios, sight-reading, and ear training. Written music theory exams are also a required component. All the requirements are listed in a graded syllabus, with variations in the structure of the grades. For example, while the Royal Conservatory of Music has 10 grades, the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music has only 8 grades.

Students can progress through the system from initial grades to diplomas such as Associate, Licentiate, and Fellowship.

Davidson and Scutt (1999) stated the advantages and the disadvantages of music examinations:

On the one hand, the system ensures that learners are introduced to a varied repertoire and specific technical tasks, such as sight-reading, scales and technical exercises. On the other hand, students can be constrained by the particular demands of the examination system. An archetype here would be of a child who could only play the examination pieces, scales and technical exercises and who, as a consequence, would be unable to engage in improvisation. (p. 81)

They further suggested that teachers should not work from the examination syllabus alone to ensure that other aspects of musical experience such as composition and improvisation are not overlooked.

Although the phrase “music examination” frequently appears in the literature relating to private music teaching and learning, most of the research I encountered dealt with student motivation and practicing.

**Benefits of Private Music lessons.** The reasons for taking private music lessons include parental influence, peer pressure, personal interests, and professional goals. What do people derive from taking music lessons?

The most obvious advantage of taking private music lessons is that students learn to perform on an instrument. The benefits of piano playing are discussed by Cooper (2001) and Duke et al. (1997), who both suggest that piano playing develops discipline and concentration. It provides personal pleasure. It is an opportunity for relaxation. It is a way of self-expression. Furthermore, Costa-Giomi (2004) agrees with Cooper and Duke et al. that piano instruction helps develop self esteem. Although these studies only investigated piano playing, these benefits might also apply to other instruments and singing.

There are other advantages to taking studio music lessons. Music lessons are said to have a transfer effect on the spatial skill of visual-motor integration (Orsmond & Miller, 1999). By reading the notes and responding with physical movements, children improve their spatial skill through practicing. Preschool children who take violin lessons appear to be more attentive and persevering (Scott, 1992). In addition, children who take private music lessons generally have better academic performance in school (Cooper, 2001; Duke et al., 1997). Although Costa-Giomi (2004) concluded that the private piano instruction does not affect children's academic achievement or their school work in mathematics and language, she found that children receiving private music lessons tended to obtain higher mathematic computation and language scores than children who did not participate in formal music instruction.

There seem to be benefits to taking private music lessons. But what is required of children for them to realize these benefits? According to McPherson and Davidson (2002), several criteria are required for children to achieve satisfactory outcomes in beginning musical learning:

1. a non-threatening home environment in which experimentation with music is possible;
2. frequent and regular practice session in which activities are clearly supported by the parents;
3. the child's display of an initial enthusiasm for beginning (such as to "keep up with a friend"). (p. 142)

The latter "evolves into an internal desire to continue as engagement with musical activity develops" (p. 142).

The teachers in Gillespie's (1991) study felt that factors such as access to an instrument, amount of student practice, degree of parental support, and student attitude influenced students' learning outcome. Moreover, Williams (2002) believes that

[t]he success of applied music study does not depend on years of study but on the impact that study has had on the student's lifelong enjoyment of music through

listening and other forms of musical participation, including performance.  
(Conclusion, ¶ 33)

In conclusion, beyond all the perceived (external) benefits such as improving spatial skills and achieving better academic performance, life long enjoyment of music seems to be the greatest benefit of taking applied music lessons.

## **Parents**

Parents are the key individuals who can influence the child besides the instrument teacher, the class teacher, and the ensemble conductor (McPherson & Davidson, 2002). Parents include other caregivers who participate in students' private musical learning and who have a direct impact on students' musical learning. Parents influence children's musical preferences (De Vries, 2003) and instrumental choices (Conway, 2000; Davidson & Borthwick, 2002). They provide material as well as psychological support. They also drive their children to lessons, sit in during lessons, assist in coaching children at home, remind children to practice, and pay for lessons.

Children who take piano lessons in North America mainly have college-educated, professional, upper-and upper-middle income parents (Sosniak, 1985; Duke et al., 1997). It seems that students in middle social status and high parental aspiration families are the ones who show more interest in learning music (Marjoribanks & Mboya, 2004). In addition, Duke et al. (1997) found that most parents of children taking private music lessons had themselves been involved in music making during childhood. Most of them had positive attitudes towards music lessons as children. Many of them continued to play the piano as adults. In 49% of the families, more than one child was studying music privately. Parents tended to view their young children positively in terms of their ability to play. Other studies indicate that parents of high musical achievers are not necessarily

music performers themselves but they enjoy being involved in musical activities as amateurs (Davidson et al., 1996; Orsmond & Miller, 1999; Sosniak, 1985).

In the section about student motivation, the research indicated that parents are sometimes the reason children begin taking music lessons. There are several reasons why parents “make” children take lessons. First, parents unintentionally raise their children in a way that reflects their own childhood — the script theory (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002). If parents took private music lessons and had a positive attitude towards their earlier instrumental/vocal learning, they want their children to have similar experiences. Secondly, many parents (Chinese parents especially) believe in “‘hothousing’ techniques where children are directed towards achieving their maximum potential in a controlled a deliberate manner” (p. 65). These parents believe that their children are musically talented or interested and thus attention is warranted (Sosniak, 1985). When these parents decide that music learning is good for their children, they “make” their children take lessons. Lastly, some parents make their children take lessons because music is something of which they were deprived in their childhood (Williams, 2002). Music is sometimes treated as a prestigious symbol for parents:

Among middle-class parents, the need to structure children’s stimulation may result from children being status symbols of leisure class. Children’s clothing, toys, education, and structure leisure serve as indicators of parental success; children become depersonalized agents of competition. (Jordan-Decarbo & Nelson, 2002, p. 211)

No matter what parents’ intentions are when their children start music lessons, parental involvement affects children’s learning. High parental supervision and support are correlated with positive learning outcomes for students (Barry & McArthur, 1994; Davidson et al., 1996; Duke et al., 1997; Macmillan, 2004; McPherson & Davidson, 2002; McPherson & Renwick, 2001; Pitts et al., 2000a; Pitts et al., 2000b). In a correlational study, Zdzinski (1996) indicated that parental involvement was significantly related to

affective, cognitive, and performance outcomes in musical learning. The relationship of parental involvement and affective outcome grows stronger as the age of students increases, whereas parental involvement only relates to cognitive and performance outcomes at the elementary level. Younger children require more parental supervision when practicing (Barry & McArthur, 1994; Duke et al., 1997). Parental support decreases as children get older because, by that time, their self-motivation and practice habits have matured (Davidson et al., 1996).

How does parental involvement in children's music lessons impact on children's learning motivation? Pitts et al. (2000b) described a form of parental involvement that would lead to children's long term interest and enthusiasm in staying with the music lessons: "[a parental involvement] that is supportive without being interfering, with the general pattern being that the children can ask for help if they need it, but are otherwise left to work independently" (p. 57). Pitts et al. also suggested that parents' low involvement supports a casual attitude on the part of children. When children begin to show a lack of motivation, "the parents' acceptance of the children's low interest and effort compounds the difficulties, reinforcing the belief that music learning is not important enough to take up a large amount of family time and effort" (p. 62).

Parenting style is another influence on children's motivation in instrumental learning. Bee (1999) describes four major parenting styles found in our society: authoritarian, permissive, authoritative, and neglectful. First, authoritarian parents are strict, highly controlling, and place high demands on children's behaviors and performance; they often make decisions for their children. Their level of warmth, communication, and responsiveness is low. Traditional Chinese parents often fit into this category. Excessive parental pressures from authoritarian parents often negatively influence children's

instrumental learning. Children living with this parenting style often start or continue instrumental learning under extrinsic pressure. Once the external pressure is no longer present, it is more likely that children's motivation to learn the instrument will decline (Davidson & Borthwick, 2002).

Secondly, permissive or indulgent parents are the ones who permit their children to do anything they want without setting boundaries. Although the nurturance level is high, communication level is low in this parenting style. This parenting style often results in producing "spoiled" children. Children are the one who decide that they want to take music lessons. Children are also the one who decide to quit the lessons. Unless the children are highly self-motivated, without the commitment of parents who encourage children through different stages of learning, it is less likely that children under this parenting style will achieve positive musical learning outcomes.

Third, authoritative parents make demands and set limits for children but they also show warmth towards their children by responding to their individual needs. Responsibility, self-discipline, independence, creativity, adaptability, and involvement in family decisions are encouraged in this parenting style. Children's motivation in musical learning is often developed intrinsically because they are capable of setting their own goal and aiming for the task without parental pressure. Research supports the view that authoritative parenting is most likely to foster children's interest in musical learning (Davidson & Borthwick, 2002).

Lastly, neglectful parents are the parents who are uninvolved with their children. They fail to either control or support their children. These parents are least likely to send their children to take instrumental lessons. If they do, their neglect of their children's

musical learning often discourages their children, who soon become unmotivated (Davidson & Borthwick, 2002).

Parents' attitudes towards practicing also affect children's practice outcomes. McPherson and Davidson (2002) surveyed 157 children who were first-year instrumental learners along with their parents and teachers. The study reported that mothers who worried about practice even before the lessons started were often the ones whose children ceased lessons within the first year. Children who stopped lessons often had unrealistically high expectations about the amount of time they would spend on practicing before starting lessons. In many cases, however, those children who gave up lessons had mothers who did not that insist their children practice.

Surprisingly, although the literature indicates the importance of parental involvement in children's instrumental learning, only a few studies have examined teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement. Macmillan (2004) investigated the attitudes to parental involvement in piano lessons. She reported that piano teachers had different views towards parental involvement in lessons and in practicing. When asked about their views towards parents' attendance at lessons, some teachers argued that "parental attendance [at lessons] inhibits the development of an independent pupil-teacher relationship, and that parental attendance makes it difficult for children to take responsibility for their own practice" (p. 308). In contrast, other teachers encourage parental attendance at lessons. These teachers claim that "practice is more efficient when supervised but that young pupils cannot adequately communicate to the parent what is to be practised, so they like to explain it to the parent....it is beneficial for parents to see in the lesson their children's achievements, challenges, problems and goals" (p. 308). Interestingly, teachers from Macmillan's study also held different opinions about parental



involvement in children's practicing. Teachers who encouraged parental involvement in their children's practicing believed that parental involvement can improve the effectiveness of the practice thus fostering an enjoyable music making experience for beginners, young children, and more successful examination preparation. Conversely, teachers who discouraged parental involvement in children's practicing believed that parental interference in children's practicing could promote a lack of independence. In conclusion, in order to achieve the best learning outcomes, Macmillan suggested that private music teachers should be the ones who guide their students' parents regarding their involvement in lessons. Therefore, the need for a solid teacher-parent relationship and communication is evident.

In conclusion, the role of parents in private musical learning is as distinctive as the role of students and teachers. Parents, students, and teachers form an important triad in the journey of instrumental/vocal teaching and learning.

### **Teaching and Learning in Private Music Studios**

In the previous section, I discussed the roles of students and parents and various issues surrounding these roles. In this section, I address different perspectives on teaching and learning in private music studio regarding the role of private music teachers and ways of teaching. I begin with the role of the third element in the private music teaching/learning relationship – the teacher.

#### **Private Music Teachers**

Private music teachers represent the master or expert in the apprenticeship dyad. They “transmit musical abilities [and] more or less influence musical tastes and values and are role models and hold a key position with regard to motivation – for good or for

bad” (Gembris & Davidson, 2002, p. 23). Most studio music teachers are musicians who have a performance background — those who are musically trained in conservatories and universities (Ward, 2004). Yet the personality traits of performer-musicians and teacher-musicians are different. According to Kemp and Mills (2002), performer-musicians are usually introverts because they tend to engage in private, imaginative activity, developing an internal world of ideas and symbolic thoughts. Music teachers, on the other hand, reveal more extroverted traits (Wubbenhorst, 1994).

A student’s first private music teacher is an important person who exerts considerable influence on the former’s motivation and musical confidence (Davidson et al., 1998; Gembris & Davidson, 2002). Beginning instrumentalists seem more attracted to teachers who show personal warmth. Davidson et al. (1998) suggested that when teaching young children, personal warmth is as important as performance competence. As children grow older, they are able to differentiate personality from ability and seek a second teacher who may be a more competent musician.

Following the tradition of apprenticeship, studio music teachers are dominant throughout the lesson, leaving students with limited initiative and responsibility for learning (Rostvall & West, 2003). Teacher authority may also limit students’ musical thinking, contributing to a lack of personal interpretation in their students’ musical performance. Because of the performance background of most private music teachers, the latter tend to focus on students whom they consider “talented,” especially teachers of more advanced students. Music for every child doesn’t seem to be a common belief in the private music teaching world, especially at advanced levels (Edwards, 1988; Nettl, 1995; Rostvall & West, 2003). In most music conservatories, students compete to study with famous teachers. Teachers also compete to get “talented” students in order to increase

their personal fame (Nettl, 1995). However, what makes an effective private music teacher?

**Effective Teaching.** There is a considerable body of literature that examines teaching effectiveness for music teachers in both general classroom music teaching and private music teaching. Cziko (1988) identified two types of teaching: explicit teaching and implicit teaching. Explicit teaching provides information through verbal instruction and demonstration. It is used consciously by the student in monitoring behaviors. Implicit teaching provides stimuli that students learn unconsciously. For example, explaining and demonstrating specific practice strategies to students is explicit learning. The information or skills were verbally and explicitly transferred to students. On the other hand, while teachers never talked about how to organize one-hour practice, students practiced in a pattern similar to what they were doing in their lessons. The students unconsciously applied the organizing skill into their practicing, an example of implicit teaching.

Attempts to characterize effective teaching are also abundant in the literature. Musical competency (Colprit, 2000; Grant & Drafall, 1991; Mills, 2002), teacher personality traits (e.g., enthusiasm, warmth, and extroversion) (Colprit; Davidson et al., 1998; Grant & Drafall; Teachout, 1997), teacher presentation (Hamman et al., 1998; Speer, 1994), diagnostic skills (Colprit; Cziko, 1988; Duke & Simmons, 2006; Gillespie, 1991; M. Schmidt, 2005), error-correction skills (Colprit), modeling skills (Colprit; Siebenaler, 1997), teacher delivery skills (Colprit; Duke & Simmons; Hamman, Baker, McAllister, & Bauer, 2000; Madsen, 2003; Ward, 2004), management skills (Colprit; Madsen; Teachout), lesson planning (M. Schmidt, 2005); the ability to choose and design appropriate teaching materials (Brittin, 2005; Colprit; Cooper, 2001; Duke et al., 1997; Hamman et al., 2000; M. Schmidt), the ability to relate and interact with students (Colprit;

Duke, 2000; Duke & Simmons; Hamman et al., 1998; Mills, 2002; Siebenaler), decision-making skills (Colprit), verbal communication skills (Benson & Fung, 2004; Cooper, ; Duke et al.; Duke; Duke & Simmons; Hamman et al., 1998; Siebenaler; Speer), nonverbal communication skills (Benson & Fung, 2004; Duke & Simmons; Hamman et al., 1998; Siebenaler), evaluation skills (Colprit), and teaching pace (Duke & Simmons; Colprit; Costa-Giomi et al., 2005; Duke, Prickett, & Jellison, 1998; Madsen; Siebenaler; Schmidt; Speer; Teachout) are all identified as elements of effective teaching. Moreover, as Cziko (1988) said, “successful music performance teachers would need to teach students how to be their own teachers” (p. 104), suggesting that the ability to develop student independence is also a requirement for teacher effectiveness. Ironically, this statement corresponds to Duke et al.’s discovery that students may stop taking lessons when they feel competent to play on their own.

**Teaching Strategies for Effective Learning.** Effective private music teachers address students’ learning needs (Kemp & Mills, 2002). In order to teach effectively, teachers need to think about how students learn. According to a survey by Ward (2004), the teaching strategies of private music teachers are influenced by various sources: all the private music teachers who participated in the survey thought that they developed their teaching strategies by teaching; 88.7 % of teachers indicated that they taught by intuition; 79.6% of the teachers learned their teaching strategies from their own teachers; 72.2% of the teachers believed that they learned the teaching strategies by attending courses and seminars; only 66.7% of teachers reported gaining their teaching strategies from reading.

Of all the teaching strategies available, private music teachers seem to consciously or unconsciously apply Vygotsky’s scaffolding theory in their teaching. They identify students’ problem (proximal zone), step in to assist students, and then step out to let

students work and learn on their own (Colprit, 2000; Duke & Simmons, 2006; Gholson, 1998; Kennell, 2002; Wiggins, 2001). As Vygotsky (1934) described, “the discrepancy between a child’s actual mental age and the level he reaches in solving problems with assistance indicates the zone of his proximal development” (p. 187). Wiggins (2001) further explained that the zone of proximal development is “the region of sensitivity to social guidance where the child is not quite able to manage a problem independently but can work toward a solution when guided by an adult who structures and models the appropriate solution to the problem” (p. 13). Using the zone of proximal development in teaching is one method of helping students become musically independent. This strategy can also help a student who has difficulty making connections in their learning (Brand, 2001).

Jørgensen (2000) and Kennell (1998) suggested that teachers should exercise caution when attempting to identify a student’s proximal zone. That is, teachers teach according to their interpretation of students’ understanding, but their interpretation can be mistaken, leading to unsatisfactory results. Therefore, special attention is needed when determining students’ proximal zone. For example, when a student keeps hitting wrong notes in a musical passage, the errors could indicate that the student needs help with fingering, among other possible interpretations. In this case, a faulty assumption that the wrong notes are due to lack of practice could have a negative impact on the student’s motivation.

Another strategy that private music teachers commonly use is a rehearsal frame — a unit of analysis in performance instruction. The frame begins when a teacher finds a problem in a student’s performance and ends when the problem is solved or another new problem is identified (Colprit, 2000). In other words, proximal performance goals are the organizing principles of the lessons:

The start point of each rehearsal frame is defined by the teacher's implicit or explicit identification of a proximal performance goal. Explicitly identified goals are relatively easy to observe because the teacher verbalizes precisely what needs to change in the students' performance (e.g., "You must bring down the pitch of the C-sharp"). Teachers may also identify performance goals nonverbally, through modeling (e.g., singing, playing, clapping) or gestures. After a goal or target is identified, the teacher may direct the student to play a series of performance trials that are intended to effect a positive change in the target. (Duke, 2000, p. 20)

Using this strategy, "selection of targets [is] determined by the occurrence of student performance errors and by the sequence of musical and technical events within the piece. The role of the teacher...seems to be reactive" (Duke, 2000, p. 217). Nevertheless, by displaying good diagnostic skills, the teacher is active in that he/she is still the one who helps students fix their musical problems.

**Philosophical Views.** In music education, teachers' beliefs about teaching music have been categorized as: 1. absolute formalist – where the meaning of music is found in the way sound is organized (melody, rhythm, harmony, tone color, texture, dynamics, and form); 2. referentialist – where the music serves external functions such as portraying stories or building character; and 3. absolute expressionist – where the expressive qualities of the music is of primary importance and music is assumed to be analogous to feelings (Reimer, 1989). Although private teachers teach according to their own beliefs, no particular philosophical positions have yet been identified as representative of studio teachers:

There are approaches to piano playing for example which we refer to as the French or Russian school of playing....while there are still Russian or French schools of playing in these countries, they will inevitably become influenced by other approaches. This happens through the migration of for example, Russian, French, or Japanese teachers and performers to other countries in Europe or North America, and also through the availability of access to various media. (A. Rowe, personal communication, March 26, 2004)

Perhaps the reason that no philosophy of private music teaching has emerged is that no systematic examination of private music teachers' beliefs has yet been undertaken.

There are many private music teaching methods geared towards the preparation of technique and repertoire (Edwards, 1988). Most method books do not show a clear philosophy but rather an implied belief in fostering better technical and musical ability through exercises and pieces (A. Rowe, personal communication, March 26, 2004). Some authors of method books state that they want children to enjoy music and have fun learning. Other method books, however, start without any word to parents and teachers. The only studio method book that states a strong philosophical standpoint is the Suzuki Method (Suzuki, 1978).

**Suzuki Philosophy.** Suzuki's Talent Education is so far the only instrumental method for young children with a philosophical framework. Suzuki's philosophy is a combination of ideas from both Eastern and Western cultures.

Suzuki formalized the "Mother Tongue Method" in which children should learn music as they are learning their mother tongue through listening, repetition, and the provision of parental supervision. He believed that musical ability is nurtured rather than innate (i.e., a talent). Therefore, children should start to learn music from a young age similar to the way they acquire language (Suzuki, 1969). In the Suzuki approach, teachers work to achieve one goal at a time. Parents are expected to attend lessons, make notes during the instruction, and coach student practice at home (Colprit, 2000; Suzuki, 1969). Furthermore, Suzuki believed in sound before sight. Agreeing with Suzuki, Young et al. (2003) wrote that aural awareness and improvisations should be emphasized before notation is tackled. Although the Suzuki Method is widely used in school string programs, it was originally intended for private music teaching (Suzuki, 1969).

As Suzuki himself was a violinist, he originally began his talent education to educate young violinists. His philosophy, however, has been so successful that it has been

adopted for other instrumental teaching such as the Suzuki piano method and Suzuki flute method. The Suzuki method is used both in North America and throughout Asian countries.

Having overviewed topics involving the role of teacher, I next move to different ways of teaching.

### **Ways of Teaching**

Private music teachers tend to follow a sequential pattern of talking, modeling, and listening to student performances (Colprit, 2000; Costa-Giomi et al., 2005; Speer, 1994). Yet there are many teaching styles. Instructions and feedback, questions and answers (the former mainly from teachers and the latter mainly from students), vocalization, demonstrations, modeling, and student imitation account for the majority of time spent in a private music lessons (Campbell, 1991; Colprit, 2000; Costa-Giomi et al., 2005; Siebenaler, 1997). These activities can be divided into verbal communication and non-verbal communication. Musicing (i.e., making music) also plays an important role in a studio music lesson. Although few studies have investigated how private music teachers use music as a teaching medium, I've reviewed the related literature that could provide insight into this topic. I will begin with an explanation of music teaching styles followed by an overview of verbal and non-verbal communication.

**Music Teaching Styles.** Teaching styles are the cumulative patterns of individual teachers' teaching behaviours (Gumm, 1991). Pratt and Associates (1998) described five perspectives in teaching: Transmission, Apprenticeship, Developmental, Nurturing, and Social Reform. As previously described, the relationship between a private music teacher and their students can be compared to that of a master and his/her apprentices. Pratt's



Apprenticeship Perspective sees teaching as the process of enculturation of a specific community (e.g., music and carpentry) through observing and modeling. In this case, private music teachers enculturate and introduce their students into the community of music. Pratt's five perspectives are derived from general education. As Gumm (1991) wrote: "it is evident that there are similar teaching styles in music as in general education, but because of the unique subject matter and types of interactions possible in the music classroom there is a more extensive list of music teaching styles" (p. 123). Only a few studies have specifically examined music teaching styles.

Gumm (1991) looked at the teaching styles of choral directors. After analysing 134 teaching behaviours through common factor analysis, eight valid dimensions of music teaching style were identified: Student Independence, Teacher Authority, Positive Learning Environment, Time Efficiency, Nonverbal Motivation, Aesthetic Music Performance, Group Dynamics, and Music Concept Learning. Further k-means cluster analysis of the director's score on the dimensions found 11 teaching styles: Student-Centered Comprehensive Musicianship Oriented, Teacher-Controlled Comprehensive Musicianship Oriented, Student/Subject Matter Interaction Oriented, Task Oriented, Music Performance Oriented, Cooperative Learning Oriented, Concept Presentation Oriented, Content Oriented, Low Teacher Involvement Oriented, Discovery Oriented, and Nonfocused Low-Interaction Oriented.

According to Tsai (2000), a music teacher's teaching style is built on "the teacher's cultural and societal upbringing, the paradigm of the profession, student's learning status, the teacher's personal learning experiences, philosophical beliefs, knowledge and personality" (p.2). Building upon Gumm (1991), Tsai studied the music teaching styles of 218 piano faculties in the Taiwanese universities. Eight dimensions of piano teaching

styles were identified through factor analysis: Enlightened Instruction, Potent Teaching, Aesthetics, Performance Effect, Responsive Learning Environment, Discriminatory Teaching and Learning, Flexible Classroom Structure, and Sequential Instruction. Subsequent cluster analysis resulted in four prevalent piano teaching styles: Performance Outcome Oriented Potent, Music Content Oriented Discriminatory, Enlightened Student Centered, and Teacher Centered. Unfortunately, I have not located studies that talk about the music teaching styles of Canadian private music teachers or the private music teachers of younger students.

**Verbal Communication.** A high percentage of teacher verbalization is observed in both private music lessons and school music classes (Colprit, 2000; Duke, 1999; Speer, 1994; West & Rostvall, 2003). In a study of the rehearsal frame of Suzuki string teachers and students, Colprit (2000) concluded that 45% of the total time was spent on teacher talk; 20% was spent on teacher modeling; and 41% was devoted to student performance. In the teacher verbalization, directives were the most frequent category; there were twice as many approvals as disapprovals.

West and Rostvall (2003) categorized the function of teacher speech as testing/inquiring, instructing, accompanying student performance, analyzing, and expressing their views about music and student performances. Teachers are the ones to control the teacher-student interaction. Students are often ignored or challenged when they try to lead an interaction. Benson and Fung (2004) further divided teacher verbalization into directives, information, analogies, positive and negative specific feedback, positive and negative non-specific feedback, and questioning. After observing private piano lessons in both China and United States, they found that teacher directives

are used most frequently and analogies are used least frequently during the lessons in both countries.

The quality of a teacher's verbal communication has a direct influence on children. Observing teacher and student behavior in Suzuki string lessons, Duke (1999) found that teachers gave more positive verbal feedback to female students than to male students. Teachers used physical positioning and asked more questions with younger students while they performed more for older students. Teachers provided more verbal explanation to students who had higher parental involvement.

Duke and Simmons (2006) studied the lessons of three renowned instrumental teachers. They found that there are three types of feedback given by experienced teachers: technical feedback, negative feedback, and positive feedback. Technical feedback was given to create interpretive effects. Negative feedback was made to direct specific musical performance effects. Infrequent positive feedback was provided when students achieved the desired performing goals. Moreover, all feedback was clear, direct, precise, and detailed.

Taylor (1997) looked at student interpretations of teacher's verbal praise in selected seventh- and eighth-grade choral classes. She specifically explored how familiarity with a teacher and the context affected student interpretations of praise as deserved or instructional. Responses from questionnaires and observation of videotaping showed that familiarity with a teacher affected student interpretation of verbal praise. The results also indicated that students were able to perceive when teachers were praising a good performance and when they were praising to provide encouragement.

In an experimental study, Duke and Henninger (1998) attempted to determine the effects of verbal corrections on student attitude and performance. One teacher taught

individual recorder lessons to 25 college students. In the first half of the lessons, the teacher directed corrective information through negative feedback. In the remaining lessons, the teacher taught corrective information using detailed directives. The authors concluded that positive attitudes and feelings of self-efficacy were the result of students' successful accomplishment of music performance, not verbal reinforcement. The different verbalizations used by the teacher to communicate corrective information did not affect adult students' attitudes towards learning. We do not know, however, if the results would be different if the same study were replicated with children.

What teachers believe about the aptitude of children affects their verbalization when they teach. Using quantitative methods, Speer (1994) looked at the verbal behaviors of independent piano teachers in private lessons. He concluded that teachers give more directions to "average" students whereas "better" students receive more specific musical task presentations. Teachers with more teaching experience tend to be more disapproving than teachers with less teaching experience.

The above findings convey the functions and influence of teacher verbalization. Teachers talk to convey information, give direction, ask questions, and give approvals and disapprovals. Students are able to perceive the purpose of different kinds of praise. Teacher verbalization can influence students' attitude towards learning. Although verbal communication occupies a large portion of time in a private music lesson, non-verbal communication is just as significant.

**Non-verbal Communication.** Teacher modeling and student performance are the major forms of non-verbal communication in private music lessons. Nonverbal communication includes interactive behaviours such as eye contact, closeness, gestures, facial expressions, rehearsal pace, volume, and modulation of voice (Hamman et al.,

1998). Nevertheless, many studies in music education looking at nonverbal communication focus only on teacher modeling and student performance. For example, effective music teachers tend to provide more modeling during lessons. There is a positive relationship between teacher modeling and student performance (Dickey, 1992; Siebenaler, 1997).

In a studio music lesson, it is customary for teachers to use a musical instrument to provide the model while students respond on their instruments. Modelling is the most efficient way to demonstrate phrasing, rhythmic patterns, pitches, and style. The value of modelling is supported by research. Dickey (1991), for example, conducted experimental research comparing the effectiveness of verbal instruction and modeling instruction in group instrumental lessons. The results revealed that effective modeling strategies improve the development of instrumental ear-to-hand coordination and physical response skills.

Besides instrumental modeling, singing is an alternative method for teacher demonstration. The latter can also be considered a form of verbalization when words are used. When teachers use singing in instrumental lessons, they do not, however, usually use words. According to interviews in Rose and Buell's (1998) qualitative research, teachers sang to demonstrate articulation, timing, and rhythmic patterns. They sang to model phrasing, contrasting versions, and stylistic issues, and to provide feedback. The tone of the singing voice is also a tool for motivation, affirmation, and encouragement. Many teachers used the voice in combination with speaking and gesture. Although teachers were conscious about the quality of their singing voice when they first started teaching, many of them stated that they became comfortable with their singing voice after many years of teaching and used singing as part of their regular teaching process. This

suggests a correlation between teaching experience and willingness to use one's voice. It is interesting to note, however, that most instrumental teachers consider themselves non-singers even though they use singing in their teaching.

Social skills and personal characteristics are closely related with non-verbal communication in private music teaching. Body language and facial expression sometimes unconsciously convey messages. Hamann et al. (1998) directed a correlational study exploring the teaching effectiveness and social skill development of preservice teachers. They found that Emotional Expressivity (an individual's skill in nonverbal communication), Emotional Sensitivity (an individual's skill in receiving and interpreting the nonverbal communication of others), and Social Control (an individual's ability to engage others in social discourse) were related to and required in effective teaching.

Nonverbal communication such as modeling, singing, and interaction behaviours are prominent in private music teaching. Modeling and singing convey knowledge and music to students. Teachers' social skills sometimes contribute to student motivation. More studies investigating teachers' social skills in music teaching are needed.

**The Use of Music in Private Lessons.** The primary functions of music as listed by Merriam (1964) are: emotional expression, physical response, aesthetic enjoyment, entertainment, communication, symbolic representation, enforcing conformity to social norms, validating social institutions and religious rituals, the continuity and stability of culture, and the integration of society. Hargreaves and North (1999) add that engagement with music increases cognitive development, contributes to self-identity, influences interpersonal relationships, and creates mood. Music is an inseparable part of applied music teaching and learning. It is, after all, the subject that is being taught, the art that is being conveyed, and an experience that is shared between teachers and students.

Only a few studies report how music is used in private music lessons beyond the material and skills to be taught. When teaching music to young children, Orsmond and Miller (1999) suggested that “music seems to be a medium that strengthens the integration of auditory, visual and motor co-ordination” (p. 35). Investigating the interactions between private guitar teachers and students, West and Rostvall (2003) claimed that teachers tend to refer to the notated music as note symbols rather than as conveying art. They also argue that teachers tend to talk about the music rather than actually perform it, in contradiction to the literature attesting to the importance of modeling.

One of the functions of music is to convey emotion. The word “emotion” seems to be identical with the word “feeling.” However, Damasio (2003) argues that emotions are actions or movements, many of them public, visible to others as they occur in the face, in the voice, in specific behaviours.... Feelings, on the other hand, are always hidden, like all mental images necessarily are, unseen to anyone other than their rightful owner, the most private property of the organism in whose brain they occur. Emotions play out in the theatre of the body. Feelings play out in the theatre of the mind. (p. 28)

Reimer (2003) further explains that

[e]motion and feeling are linked, feeling being the “playing out” in actual experience of what the body is emotionally undergoing. That playing out — the intricacies of felt experience as we interact with enviroing conditions — is what consciousness “notices,” or “is aware of.” (p. 81)

In a later article, Reimer (2004) clearly illustrates how the word “feeling” connects to “music”:

To play “musically,” which essentially means to play “with appropriate feeling,” requires that one be aware, whether overtly or covertly, of the rules and regulations culturally established, to reflect them in one’s sounding and, in Western and other cultures, to add one’s own imaginative expressions to those considered exemplary. Musical feeling, then, resides in how performers, guided by the sounds imagined by the composers they are interpreting, actualize the interactive sound-implications a musical system affords. (p. 6)

Therefore, rather than saying that music conveys emotion, it may be more accurate to say that music expresses emotion that generate feelings in us as performers and listeners. In another words, music is a felt experience for performers and listeners.

Research indicates that performers consider that emotional expressivity is an important aspect of music performance (Juslin & Persson, 2002). Music is used to communicate emotions from performers to the listeners. Using an ecological approach in an experimental study, Gentile (1998) found that both adults and children are able to identify the music excerpts that express happiness, sadness, and anger. Emotional communication in music is significant for musicians and listeners because this communication stimulates our feelings and our mind to enjoy the aesthetic aspects of the music. Nevertheless, how do music teachers teach musical expressivity?

According to Juslin and Persson (2002), the expressive aspects of performance seem to be neglected in instrumental music teaching. Teachers tend to emphasize skills rather than expressive aspects resulting in a delayed artistic development in students. Aural modeling and experiential strategies such as the use of metaphors and the focus on the performer's felt emotions are the traditional strategies for teaching expression. Juslin and Persson further add that providing cognitive feedback and relating music theory to emotional communication (e.g., happiness equals fast tempo, small tempo variability, bright timbre) can also enhance students' musical expression.

As mentioned above, many teachers emphasize technique before addressing the interpretive aspects of music. It is difficult to teach the expressive aspects to beginners while they are struggling with note learning and may not achieve enough technical ability to express the music. Therefore, Duke and Simmons (2006) suggested that effective teachers should be able to assign repertoire according to students' capabilities:



The challenge for the students then, is to execute the technical and musical demands of repertoire with the utmost skill every time they engage in performance. Students come to lessons having learned the notes of the piece and having had time to make independent interpretive decisions. It is from this point — notes learned and musical ideas formulated — that work in the lesson begins. (p. 11)

These words might explain why private music teachers emphasize technique more for beginning students. It is not until students are technically mature enough that they can achieve satisfying musical interpretations. Although interpretation is often encouraged, private music teachers tend to allow students interpretive choices within a limited frame established by the teachers. Once a student's interpretation is different from the teacher's, teachers tend to lead the students to adopt their presumably more informed interpretations.

Whether one should teach notes before sounds has been a controversial topic over the years. Studio instrumental and vocal teachers tend to teach notated music (Nettl, 1995). Children are encouraged to read the notes while also learning technique. "I can't read the notation" is sometimes the equivalence of "I can't play" (Houston, 2003). As a result, many children rely on the notated music rather than listening to the sounds they are making. On the other hand, educators such as Pestalozzi, Mason, Suzuki, Kohut, and Gordon all advocate the sound before symbol approach (McPherson & Gabrielsson, 2002). Although the sound before sign approach has its advantages and is the norm in oral cultures, children could also rely more on the ear and have poor sight-reading skills because of the delayed sign learning.

Because private music teachers use music as a reference or tool to teach students how to perform on an instrument, the choice of music impacts greatly on student learning. Private music teachers tend to emphasize works by the great classical masters (Nettl, 1995). Students, however, develop an ownership of some music. Children tend to view classical music as "their" (i.e., meaning people of the authority group – teachers and

schools) music, while they think of popular music as “our” music (Williams, 2002). In the past, private music teachers who prepared students for examinations and competitions taught the classical repertoire (Western art music) because these works were required. For example, different systems of music examinations all require students to prepare four or five selections from Western art music of different eras followed by technical works such as scales, sight-reading, and ear tests (Royal Conservatory of Music Examinations, 2004; Trinity College London, 2004). It was not until recently that examination institutes included popular music in their examination syllabus (Royal Conservatory of Music Examinations, 2004). In the TV program “The Piano Man,” Houston (2003) mentions that one needs to take lessons to be a classical pianist, referring to the focus on classical repertoire in private piano lessons. Interestingly, De Vries (2003) suggested that for those who studied piano as children, classical music and popular music are the most enjoyable lesson content; Cooper (2001) wrote that, for those who start lessons as adults, classical and religious music are the most enjoyable lesson content. Duke et al. (1997), however, argued that when asking what students like to play most on the piano, 36 % of children responded to “music that my teachers” give me while 28 % of children selected “popular music from sheet music and books” as their favourite to play on the piano. Nevertheless, rather than stick to the works of great classical masters, studio music teachers should explore a variety of music styles congruent with student interests (Cooper; De Vries; Duke et al.; Siebenaler, 1997; Speer, 1994).

We only know a little about the use of music in private music lessons. More research is required in order to understand how and why certain types of music are used in a private music studio and their impact on student learning, commitment, and life-long interest in music.

## **Culture and Gender**

My research participants were Taiwanese Canadians private music teachers and students. As a female, Taiwanese-Canadian, private music student and teacher, I have experienced and noticed a number of issues in culture and gender. How do beliefs in Western and Eastern cultures differ? How are attitudes to learning different in the West and the East? Do boys and girls learn music in different ways? Having these questions in mind, I set out to explore these two aspects.

### **Culture**

Culture is the web of living in which we share ways of conceiving the world, knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, rituals, rules, behaviours, and languages. It is humanly-constructed and transferred through artifacts from generation to generation (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2002; see also Cole, 1999). According to this definition, culture refers to the lived experiences of people around the world. Recently, social scientists define culture as “the ways in which social life is constructed through the ideas that people have about it, and the practices that flow from those ideas” (Rose, 2002, p. 5). Private music teaching, for example, is a culture within larger cultures. As two larger cultures are involved in this study, both Chinese (e.g., Mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan) and North American (e.g., Canada and United States) cultures and experiences and beliefs about teaching and learning music will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

**East and West.** While Western education philosophies have been greatly influenced by Plato and Socrates, Chinese educational beliefs revolve around the philosophy of Confucius. Chinese people refer to Confucius as the greatest teacher of all generations.

Confucius believed in respect for elders, delayed gratification, and discipline (Brand, 2002; Ding, 2000; Ku, 1984). He also believed that music is part of a moral education (Ding, 2000; Ku, 1984).

The way a child is brought up has a great impact on the child's attitude and valuing of learning. Eastern collectivism emphasizes reciprocity, obligation, duty, security, tradition, dependence, harmony, obedience to authority, and equilibrium (Brand, 2002). The teacher plays the role of an authoritative figure under Confucian influence. Chinese culture places a high value on education for self-esteem, self-improvement, and family honour. Family is the priority of each individual: "[An] individual is a developing part of a continuing family lineage. It is a progressive continuity of a specific ancestry of one's family; each individual is part of an ethnic continuity and is defined within those relationships" (Pratt, Kelly, & Wong, 1998).

Because authority is respected, Chinese children are expected to be dutiful and obedient from a very young age. Filial piety is strongly emphasized in this culture. Chinese parents support their children through the whole educational journey because this is a way of being responsible and contributing to family continuity. In return, high educational performance is expected (Brand, 2002). The Chinese parent-child relationship also applies to that of teacher-student (Pratt et al., 1998). A teacher is viewed as a fatherly figure in the education setting. Students must be dutiful and obedient to their teachers. In addition to guides or facilitators of learning, teachers are also role models and consultants who are involved in students' daily lives. A teacher's responsibility does not only reside in giving students knowledge but also in educating them to be useful members of society (Wong, 1999). This teacher/student relationship is changing today, however, because of the influence of Western cultures (Chan, 1999). Furthermore, under

the Confucian influence, Chinese culture tends to attribute success to effort rather than ability (Edwards, 1988; Hallam, 2002; Pratt et al., 1998).

Although there are no statistics on exactly how many children in the Chinese/Taiwanese community study music, many children take studio music lessons. Nonetheless, Western music seems to be the formal “music” around the world (Ho, 2003; Nettl, 1995; Oku, 1994). This phenomenon might be the result of the early European colonization of arts education (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2002) and globalization (Ho & Law, 2002). Ho (2003) indicates that school music currently taught in three Chinese cities (Taipei, Shanghai, and Hong Kong) is primarily Western. Music teachers’ training is based on Western music education practice. More children are studying Western instruments such as violin and piano rather than choosing traditional Chinese instruments as their first instruments. Western influence is strong in the world of private music teaching.

For its part, Western culture respects an individualistic style of creativity, bravery, self-reliance, and solitude (Brand, 2002; Wong, 2004). The teacher’s role, although still dominant, leaves more space for student self expression. Because of the focus on individualistic style, parents do not have high educational expectations as much as Asian parents. Educational performance is less emphasized in practice (Brand, 2002). Western culture tends to attribute success to ability, skill, and individual differences (Edwards, 1988; Hallam, 2002; Pratt et al., 1998). This might be a reason why private music teachers in Taiwan who teach Western instrumental music tend to nurture musical “talent.”

Several studies have examined the differences between North American music students and Chinese music students. In an ethnographic study, Brand (2002) interviewed

three undergraduate music education majors in United States and three undergraduate music education majors in Hong Kong. He found that, during the interviews, American students seemed to need more personal space/distance when talking to the interviewer than the Chinese students. In addition, American students seemed to be comfortable with conversation whereas Chinese students were comfortable with silence. The latter were more careful about what they said. The verbal style of Americans was direct and pointed while Chinese had an indirect, subtle verbal style. Americans were more confident and showed more emotion in contrast to the restrained emotion of the Hong Kong students. The Hong Kong students were more uncomfortable with compliments than were American students. When talking about concerns related to schooling and their music learning, Hong Kong students expressed concerns about their capacity to please principals, parents, and children. American students, however, expressed concerns about external issues such as school violence, parental support, and funding. All the Hong Kong students placed family values higher than American students in their self descriptions.

Learning styles are also different for North American and Asian students. According to Brand (2001), Asian music majors are often judged to be talented, diligent, and hard working. They are also viewed as rote learners by faculty members. However, after comparing American and Chinese music majors learning styles, Brand found that American students have a greater tendency to rely more on extrinsic motivation and rote learning than Chinese music students. The results also showed that both American and Chinese music students shared a depth of involvement and dedication to music study and musical achievement.

In conclusion, the Confucian values of effort, discipline, respect of authority, and family values are deeply imbedded in Chinese students. In contrast, North American students seem to be more open to expressing their own ideas as a result of individualism.

## **Gender**

There is a vast amount of research on gender in music and music education. Although no research on gender in private music teaching has been located, it would be prudent to be alert to possible gender issues in private music teaching.

First, there seems to be a relationship between the choice of instrument and children's gender (Conway, 2000; Elliott, 1996; Harrison & O'Neill, 2000; Ho, 2003; Rife et al., 2001). In Chinese culture, the musical activities most associated with females are singing and piano playing. Conducting and large orchestral instrumental playing are for males. Girls are more likely to relate to indoor instruments such as piano, violin, flute, and Chinese plucked instruments while boys relate to larger instruments such as cello, double bass, and brass. Girls are more open to different genres of music from classical to popular than are boys. Both boys and girls prefer popular music in their music education (Ho, 2003). The above statements are also true in the Western culture (Dibben, 2002; Harrison & O'Neill, 2000). Dibben (2002) further suggested that "parents may encourage their children to choose instruments on the basis of gender stereotypes" (p. 122). In addition to parental influences, social values and media influence the choice of musical instruments for males and females (Conway, 2000). It might be helpful for music teachers and parents to provide counter-stereotypical role models such as males playing flute or females playing trumpet in order to minimize gender stereotyping in instrumental selection (Conway, 2000; Harrison & O'Neill, 2000).

Secondly, boys and girls have different attitudes towards making music, according to some research studies. Looking at children's attitude towards making music, Green (1997) suggested that both boys and girls think that girls are better at singing and that girls are more involved in music making. This conclusion corresponds with Cooper's (2001) finding that females are more likely to rate their piano learning experiences positively than males. Hallam (2004) also found that girls tend to spend more time practicing than boys. When applying the attribution theory to music learning, females perceive ability and effort as more important than do males (Legette, 1998). Hallam (1998b), however, argued that females tend to attribute their success to luck rather than to ability.

Third, gender stereotyping often labels music a feminine activity (Brand & Dolloff, 2002; Conway, 2000). When asking music education students from the United States and Hong Kong to draw an image of a music teacher, most of the students drew pictures of an older conservative female. The female teachers from the drawings also shared common personality traits; they were portrayed as smiling, warm people (Brand & Dolloff, 2002).

Lastly, gender plays a role in how young children interact with their teachers. Girls engage quickly with teachers whom they perceive to be friendly because they respond best to nurturance, caring, emotional support, and agreeableness. On the other hand, boys are more likely to base their relationship with teachers on achievement-oriented teaching (Davidson et al., 1998).

In summary, gender plays a role in student motivation and teacher-student relationships. It influences at least learning attitudes and the choice of instruments. Therefore, it is an issue worthy of attention by private music teachers and parents.



### **Summary**

This review of the literature explored private music teaching, those involved in private music education, the effective delivery of teaching, and the nature of learning in private music lessons. The literature revealed that private music education tends to follow an expert-novice apprenticeship model. Students, parents, and teachers form a strong triad in that they interact in shaping motivation, learning and teaching beliefs, practice habits, and learning outcomes. Moreover, cultural beliefs and gender also seem to influence private music teaching and learning. A lack of qualitative research in private music teaching is evident.

The next chapter describes the ethnographic methodology used in this study.

## Chapter Four – The Way

*“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” Lao-Tsu*

This chapter explains the research design of this study. According to Van Manen (1990), “[m]ethodology refers to the philosophic framework, the fundamental assumptions and characteristics of a human science perspective” (p. 27). Method, on the other hand, “is charged with methodological considerations and implications of a particular philosophical or epistemological perspective” (p. 28). Van Manen further explains:

Techniques refer to the virtually inexhaustible variety of theoretical and practical procedures that one can invent or adopt in order to work out a certain research method...the term “procedure” refers to various rules and routines associated with the practice of research.” (p. 28)

Knowing about methodologies, methods, techniques, and procedures helps researchers organize and construct their studies. The purpose of research has a direct relationship to the methodology chosen. The purpose of my study was to examine the private music teaching and learning of Taiwanese Canadians. Because my research questions involved looking at how, why, and what Taiwanese Canadians teach and learn in private music lessons, qualitative research approaches were more appropriate than quantitative research approaches.

### Methodology

Qualitative research is the general term for the following types of research: human science research, interpretive inquiry, naturalistic inquiry, and constructivist research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Van Manen, 1990). While quantitative researchers search for

truth with scientific means and usually associate their finding with numbers, qualitative researchers believe that humans are unique beings. It is impossible to study human experience in the same way that scientists investigate physical objects. Qualitative research is based on five philosophical beliefs (or axioms).

### **Five Axioms**

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the five axioms of naturalistic inquiry emanate from a postpositivist world view. The first three axioms also resemble Creswell's (1998) three philosophical assumptions of qualitative research. The first axiom is ontological; it describes the nature of reality. Reality in naturalist inquiry is subjective, multiple, constructed, and holistic. The aim of qualitative research is not to find a singular reality but rather to construct a meaningful understanding of human experiences (Bresler & Stake, 1992). Human beings do not acquire ready-made knowledge and meaning; they build concepts, schemes, and models to make sense of experience and arrive at meanings through constructing and interpreting experiences (Schwandt, 1994).

The second axiom is epistemological: it explains the relationship between those doing the research and what is being researched (Creswell, 1998). Instead of taking a neutral position as does a quantitative researcher, in qualitative research the researcher acknowledges her impact on the study. Indeed, the researcher (knower) and that being researched (the known) are interactive and inseparable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Objectivity is not a goal.

The third axiom is axiological: it identifies the role of valuing in qualitative research. The values of any inquiry are influenced by the inquirer, the choice of paradigm/method, the substantive theory, the context, and the value resonance (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Value-laden preconception is acknowledged as well as biases (Creswell, 1998).

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) fourth axiom regards the possibility of generalization. The authors believe that the aim of an inquiry is to obtain a time- and context-bound idiographic statement of individual cases. This means that the "reality" will change as the time and the context of individual cases change.

The fifth axiom explains the possibility of causal linkages. Where positivists argue that every action can be explained as a result of a cause, naturalists think that all entities in the qualitative research simultaneously interact, influence, and shape each other (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, causal relationship is not sought.

### **Characteristics of Qualitative Research**

The characteristics of qualitative research are derived from or based on the above five axioms. I discuss these characteristics in detail in the following sections. Most characteristics are taken from Lincoln and Guba's (1985) book about naturalistic inquiry.

**Constructivism/Interpretivism/Symbolic interactionism.** Qualitative research is constructed and interpretive. The ideas of constructivism emerged from the German intellectual tradition of hermeneutics, the *Verstehen* (understanding) tradition in sociology, the phenomenology of Alfred Schutz, and critiques of scientism and positivism (Schwandt, 1994). Constructivists deny the positivists' opposition of subjectivity and objectivity. They accept the hermeneutical character of the existence of both subjectivity and objectivity. Meanings are learned not only through history, time, and language; meanings are learned by people. In order to understand meaning, one must shape or interpret it. Interpretation is a process of organizing people's readings of the meanings. Therefore, interpretivists emphasize the first-person subjective experience. Because

meaning is constructed through inquirers' interpretations, it cannot be tested or verified. We can only judge an interpretation by looking into criteria such as thoroughness, coherence, comprehensiveness, usefulness, and worthiness of adoption (Schwandt, 1994).

Symbolic interactionism is an example of interpretivism and constructivism.

Symbolic interactionists think that humans make meaning based on the environment around them. These meanings are derived from social interaction and communication among individuals. Communication and interaction such as language, media, text, and non-verbal cues are symbols. Meanings are developed from these symbols through individual interpretive processes (Schwandt, 1994). In another words, meaning only exists when we say what we think the meaning is. As each person will have a different way of constructing and interpreting meaning, meanings or realities are multiple and subjective. Furthermore, interpretation is idiographic (i.e., emphasizing individual cases) because different interpretations produce different meanings and thus create different realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The purpose of the written report, then, is not to portray a single reality but rather to invite readers to make their own interpretations (Bresler & Stake, 1992).

**Natural Setting.** Qualitative inquiries are conducted in natural settings, and context is emphasized. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested, realities should be understood as a whole in order to obtaining holistic meanings. They also indicate that

[b]ecause of the belief that the very act of observation influences what is seen, and so the research interaction should take place with the entity-in-context for fullest understanding.... because of the belief in complex mutual shaping rather than linear causation, which suggests that the phenomenon must be studied in its full-scale influence (force) field. (p. 39)

**Human Instruments.** Naturalistic inquiries use humans as the primary data-collecting instruments, not tests, questionnaires, or surveys. As I mentioned earlier, meaning is only achieved when someone interprets events. A human is the only

instrument who can grasp, evaluate, interpret, and record meanings from different interactions in the research field (Bresler & Stake, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher is the instrument.

**Utilization of Tacit Knowledge.** Tacit knowledge is recognized in naturalistic inquiries. Tacit knowledge, such as non-verbal cues, is the intuitive or felt knowledge that underpins propositional knowledge. In an interaction between the researcher and the respondent, more is happening than spoken words. It is only by recognizing the tacit knowledge that we are able to achieve “whole” realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Use of Qualitative Methods.** Naturalistic inquiries require the use of qualitative methods. Through constantly writing and reflecting, qualitative researchers are able to develop their own interpretations. Data collecting methods such as interview, observation, and interpretation of artifacts are common techniques utilized in naturalistic inquiries. Multiple data sources are used to show different perspectives of human experiences. Qualitative methods are more efficient and able to describe multiple realities than quantitative alternatives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Other Characteristics.** I have summarized other characteristics included in Lincoln and Guaba’s (1985) book:

1. A qualitative approach implies the use of purposive sampling.
2. Qualitative research prefers inductive data analysis.
3. Qualitative research prefers to have a guiding substantive theory (grounded theory) emerge from the data rather than testing a theory.
4. The design of qualitative research is emergent rather than constructed.
5. The meaning of the outcome is negotiated between both researchers and respondents in order to achieve multiple realities. Interpretation by participants (emic-insider) and researchers (etic-outsider) is acknowledged.
6. The case study reporting mode is preferred because this technique is able to adopt an in-depth description in the research field.
7. Qualitative research hesitates to make broad application of findings because of multiple and different realities.
8. Special criteria are needed for trustworthiness.

Although Lincoln and Guba’s book is often cited in discussions of qualitative

research, their ideas are from almost 20 years ago. I've looked into recent books and find that Moustakas' (1994) description of the qualities of human science is more straightforward. The common qualities of human science are:

1. recognizing the value of qualitative designs and methodologies, studies of human experiences that are not approachable through quantitative approaches,
2. focusing on the wholeness of experience rather than solely on its objects or parts,
3. searching for meanings and essences of experience rather than measurements and explanations,
4. obtaining descriptions of experience through first-person accounts in informal and formal conversations and interviews,
5. regarding the data of experience as imperative in understanding human behavior and as evidence for scientific investigations,
6. formulating questions and problems that reflect the interest, involvement, and personal commitment of the researcher, and
7. viewing experience and behavior as an integrated and inseparable relationship of subject and object and of parts and whole. (p. 21)

These qualities are consistent with Lincoln and Guba's characteristics.

To sum up, qualitative research is holistic and empirical. It is field-oriented and uses the researcher as the key instrument. It is descriptive and interpretive when reporting meanings. Furthermore, it acknowledges subjectivity and focuses on emic (insider) issues. From the various qualitative research methods, I have chosen ethnography as my way of looking into the world of private music lessons of Taiwanese Canadians.

### **The Method**

Ethnography is also called participant observation research or field research (Moustakas, 1994; Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2002). It is a study of a cultural group through direct observation, formal and informal interviews, communications, and interaction with the people of that culture group (Moustakas). It interprets and describes a culture, system, or social group by studying the language, behaviors, customs, and ways of life (Creswell, 1998). Ethnography is used in anthropological, sociological, and psychological research (Moustakas).

The setting where ethnographic researchers work is called a field. Fieldwork is the process of doing ethnography. Fieldworkers study people in context. A holistic cultural portrait is the purpose of ethnography. Creswell (1998) suggests that cultural portrait is “an overview of the entire cultural scene by pulling together all aspects learned about the group and showing its complexity” (p. 61). Researchers first gain access to a cultural group through gatekeepers and then locate key informants to gain insight into the culture. Researchers step outside to observe people and step inside unfamiliar events and artifacts and to examine them closely. They have the emic commitment to capture the perspective of the insiders in the culture yet, generally, they portray etic descriptions as an outsider (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2002).

Because no studies that I found investigated the culture of the private music teaching of Taiwanese Canadians, I wanted to provide an in-depth cultural portrait of private music teaching and learning for this group. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss how my research was conducted. I will describe the field of research and the selection of participants, data collection, and data analysis. I will also describe how I dealt with human ethics and trustworthiness and the limitation of my study. Finally, I will discuss my position as a researcher.

### **The Social Situation**

Spradley (1980) thinks that identifying a social situation or a field is the first step when doing ethnographic research. Social situations involve three elements: a place (also known as field of the study), actors, and activities. The social situation of my research was the private music teaching world of Taiwanese Canadian teachers, students, and parents. The place of the study was the music studio where private music teaching



happens. The actors of the field were the Taiwanese Canadian teachers, students, and parents who spoke either Mandarin or English or a mixture of both. The activities of this social situation were the teaching, learning, and interaction of Taiwanese Canadian private music teachers, students, and parents.

### **Selection of Key Informants**

The participants in ethnographic research are called key informants (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2002). The key informants in my study were Taiwanese Canadian private music teachers, their students, and students' parents currently living in greater Vancouver, BC, a pool selected because I resided in the area. On the surface, private music teaching only involves teachers and students. However, "[parents] are other key individuals who can influence the child, instrument teacher, class teacher, and ensemble conduction" (McPherson & Davidson, 2002, p. 142). Parents have a direct impact on students' musical learning. They influence children's musical preferences (De Vries, 2003); they provide material as well as psychological support. They also drive their children to lessons, sit in during lessons, assist in coaching children at home, remind children to practice, and pay for the lessons. It was necessary to include parents' perspectives to provide a full description of my field.

I recruited five Taiwanese Canadian private music teachers from my personal friends and from recommendations made by Ms. Chen from the Taiwanese Canadian Cultural Society. Ms. Chen is an influential person in the Taiwanese music community in Vancouver. She provided me with a contact list of Taiwanese Canadian private music teachers who were actively teaching and performing in the greater Vancouver area. My criteria for selection were that the teachers had received their early musical training and

primary education in Taiwan and earned their post-secondary degrees in Canada, were currently teaching more than 10 private students, and had more than three years of studio music teaching experience. Each teacher identified one of his/her students 9 years or older and his/her caregiver as potential participants for the study. Children in this age group were selected because they should be mature enough to provide a clear description of their experiences of private music lessons (Bee, 1999). Age was the only criterion for student selection. I left the selection to teachers because they were more familiar with their students.

I made the initial contact by calling and e-mailing all my Taiwanese Canadian private music teacher friends and the teachers on the list provided by Ms. Chen. During the first telephone and e-mail contact, I introduced myself and briefly described the purpose and the procedures of my research. There were 25 teachers on my contact list. Six teachers refused to participate in the research immediately because they were uncomfortable having someone observe their teaching. Three teachers were too busy with their families (i.e., taking care of sick mother or welcoming a newborn) and were not teaching at that time. Four teachers had moved back to Taiwan. Five teachers did not respond. There were eight teachers who expressed an interest in joining the research. I then e-mailed or personally delivered a letter of invitation along with a consent form to these teachers. After reading the letter of invitation, three teachers indicated conflicts with their schedules. Lily, Lauren, Sally, Patricia, and Frank were the five teachers who participated with me throughout the research period.

Next, the five teacher participants talked to their students and students' parents about the research. All teachers indicated that they chose students based on the personality of students' parents. The teachers talked to the parents whom they thought would more

likely agree to participate in the research. It might be also possible that teachers selected certain students and parents because they would reflect better on them as teachers. Nevertheless, because I was not seeking a random sample and because of the nature of my interview questions which were neither controversial nor personally invasive, I concluded that teachers' selection of students and students' parents would not impact negatively on my research findings. The teachers then provided me with the contact information of the students and their parents. At this point I invited participation and obtained written consent from each individual.

### **Getting Consent**

Prior to recruiting the key informants, I had applied for Ethics Approval (Appendix 1) for Human Participant Research from the University of Victoria. After receiving the Committee's approval, I sent a letter informing potential participants about the purpose of the research and their contribution along with a consent form (Appendix 2). Private music teachers who agreed to participate in this research gave me their lists of chosen students and provided contact information. I called and explained the research to the selected students and their parents. A separate letter of consent was distributed to and collected from students and their parents (Appendices 2A & 2B). The letter of consent explained that the data I gathered was confidential and anonymous and that participants would be free to withdraw from the study at any time. I also explained that in order to preserve the anonymity of the participants, I would use pseudonyms in my writing instead of their real names. Because I planned to videotape all private music lessons and record interviews throughout the data collection period, a separate section in the consent form requested permission from teachers, students, and parents for these collection

methods. Because my student participants were underage, I asked both the children and their parents/guardians to sign their consent forms.

### **Collecting Information**

Ethnographers collect data from a cultural group through direct observation, formal and informal interviews (e.g., daily conversation through telephone, e-mails, and in person), and interaction with the people of that culture group (Moustakas, 1994; Spradley, 1980; Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2002). Upon entering the field, an ethnographer needs to ask good questions, be a good listener, be adaptive and flexible, have firm grasp of the issues being studied, and be unbiased (Yin, 2003).

The data was collected between late April, 2005 and June, 2006. Several qualitative methods were implemented in this research in order to ensure credibility and transferable data.

**Observation.** Observation is widely used in ethnographic research (Creswell, 1998; Spradley, 1980; Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2002). When entering into a field, the researcher is creating opportunities for direct observation. Behaviors and environmental conditions are two main focuses for observation (Creswell, 1998; Spradley, 1980). There are two types of observers: non-participant observers and participant observers (Spradley, 1980; Yin, 2003). Non-participant observers observe everyday activities, habitats, and people. They remain invisible and nonintrusive. They record and interpret from an etic point of view. On the other hand, as a participant observer, an investigator can gain an “emic” (insider) point of view (Berg, 2004; Creswell, 1998; Spradley, 1980). The researcher is a participant in the field she/he is studying. Participant observers are able to manipulate minor events such as creating meetings with people in the field (Yin, 2003).

This latter type of observation creates better opportunities for accessing events and groups than do other data collecting techniques but also increases the possibility of personal bias in interpretation.

Observation is an efficient way of gaining tacit knowledge. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), tacit knowledge is the “information gleaned from a situation without (often) explicit knowledge on the part of either sender or receiver that they are responding to or giving off useful information” (p. 196). Tacit knowledge is evident in the nonverbal cues in unobtrusive measures. Golden (1980) identified different non-verbal cues:

Proxemic communication is the use of interpersonal space to communicate attitudes. Chronemics communication is the use of spacing of speech and length of silence in conversation. Kinesic communication includes any body movements or postures, and paralinguistic communication includes all the variations in volume, pitch and quality of voice. (p. 335)

Because only humans can sense, feel, describe, and interpret non-verbal cues, observation uses humans as the instrument of data collection.

Observation can be recorded in different modes. Lincoln and Guba (1985) provide the following list:

- running notes, straightforwardly anecdotal or organized into categories at the time that they are taken;
- field experience logs or diaries, similar to field notes but usually written at some time after the actual observation;
- notes on thematic units, which have been defined ahead of time, as, for example, the units specified by a grounded theory;
- chronologs, running accounts of behaviour organized along a fairly; rigid time line (e.g., recording each separate behavioural episode and noting the time at which it occurred, or making a notation at some arbitrary temporal interval, say, every two minutes);
- context maps, that is, maps, sketches, or diagrams of the context within which the observation occurs, such as a classroom; movement of observed persons can be recorded on such maps as well;
- entries according to some taxonomic or categorical system, as, for example, taxonomies or categories that have been provisionally constructed from earlier interview or observational notes;
- sociometrics, relation diagrams that depict various types of interactions (e.g., who plays with whom) or relationships (e.g., who names whom as best friend);
- debriefing questionnaires, intended not for the respondents but for the observer,

- typically used after the observer leaves the scene, to remind him or her of major categories of information that should be noted;
  - debriefing sessions, with other inquiry team members, also for the sake of drawing out from the observer what has been seen and heard; and
  - rating scales and checklists, although these forms are more usually associated with conventional inquiry since they assume a priori knowledge of what is useful to observe (the items must be specified in advance).
- (p. 275)

The official observation period of this study was 2 months. During these two months, I observed four private music lessons for each teacher-student-parent triad. The duration of lessons varied for each teacher-student pair. Normally, a private music lesson lasts from 30 minutes to an hour. In order to avoid or limit participants' reactivity behaviors such as the guinea pig effect and the Hawthorne effect due to my presence in the research field, I video recorded all 20 lessons for field control with a tripod and a Sony digital video camera recorder (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I arrived at the site of the scheduled private music lesson 30 minutes early each time to set up the video recording equipment. I then showed the teacher participants how to turn the camera on and off before I left the site. During the private music lessons, I waited in a different room or in my car until the end of the scheduled lesson then retrieved the video recording equipment. After each private music lesson, I transcribed the video recording into a text record with minute-by-minute detail. The text record (see Appendix 3 for a sample) included participants' spoken language, music, changes in prosody, gestures/spatial movements, and other actions (West & Rostvall, 2003). Parentheses or brackets were used to indicate laughter, pauses, or interruptions. I later analyzed the observation based on the text record. My original plan was to observe and include the facial expressions of the teachers and students as part of the non-verbal behaviors. However, because of the location of the piano in teachers' studio or students' houses, it was sometimes difficult to place the camera at my desired angle to provide a clear view of teachers' and students' facial

expressions. Therefore, I removed facial expression from my analysis.

**Interviews.** Interviews usually involve two people face-to-face in homes, office, school or other natural settings where the interview can be conducted without disruption. Telephone interviews and e-mail exchanges are other strategies used when it is difficult to do an in-person interview. This one-to-one verbal exchange interview is also called a key informant interview, where the interviewee is considered to have special knowledge and insight related to the research questions. Normative interviews from the positivist paradigm include mailed or self-administered questionnaire and telephone surveys (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998; Fontana & Frey, 1994). They are used to collect data that is categorized and analyzed statistically. In qualitative research, key informant interviews consider the informant's experience and knowledge of the topic being discussed. The key informant teaches the interviewer about events and personal perspectives (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998). The purpose of interviews is for the researcher to be able to capture what he/she is unable to observe directly, to capture multiple realities and perceptions, and to assist in interpretation (Bresler & Stake, 1992). Lincoln and Guba (1985) further indicate that

[t]he purposes of doing an interview include, among others, obtaining here-and now constructions of persons, events, activities, organizations, feelings, motivations, claims, concerns, and other entities; reconstructions of such entities as experienced in the past; projections of such entities as they are expected to be experienced in the future; verification, emendation, and extension of information (constructions, reconstructions, or projections) obtained from other sources, human and nonhuman (triangulation); and verification, emendation, and extension of constructions developed by the inquirer (member checking). (p. 268)

Interviews can be categorized as structured and unstructured. For structured interviews, researchers plan ahead based on their research questions and construct the questions to find out the specific answers they need. Structured interviews are similar to questionnaires except they are conducted orally. The advantages of structured interviews

are control, reliability, and speed. However, structured interviews limit what the respondent can talk about. The questions that the researcher has in mind might not be helpful in finding out what the researcher wants to know. And because the questions are asked in the same format and sequence for each participant, structured interviews are cold and unnatural (Smith, 1995).

Unstructured interviews are also known as open-ended ethnographic interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Smith (1995) called unstructured interviews “semi-structured” because the researcher has a set of questions but instead of following strictly the interview schedule, the interview is merely guided by the schedule. The order of questions is less important. The respondent is free to express his/her interests and concerns. The researcher is free to explore interesting areas raised during the conversation. The respondent is considered the expert on the subject. Rapport and empathy are emphasized. Flexibility of coverage and richer data are the advantages. On the other hand, semi-structured interviews provide less control for the investigator; they take longer and are harder to analyze (Smith, 1995).

An interview protocol is recommended prior to the actual interview. An interview protocol addresses necessary equipment, procedures, general rules, and interview questions. It helps researchers organize and guides investigators in carrying out the data collection (Yin, 2003). I find that an interview protocol is similar to a lesson plan that teachers construct prior to teaching.

Smith (1995) gave the following suggestions to those constructing interview questions: use questions that are neutral rather than value-laden or leading; construct the questions with language familiar to respondents; and use open-ended questions that encourage respondents' thoughts and feelings (no yes/no answers).



When conducting the interview, the researcher is encouraged to use *epoche* (i.e., bracketing), which is borrowed from phenomenological methodology. The researcher has to set aside his/her past associations, assumptions, understandings, and biases so that the interview results will not be influenced by the interviewer's assumptions (Moustakas, 1994), an important consideration given my insider status. Bracketing involves the researcher's identifying his/her assumptions and biases. The interviewer should be courteous, friendly, and pleasant (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Good attending behaviors such as relaxed posture, eye contact, addressing responses, and active listening will make the respondents comfortable and increase the likelihood of a quality interview (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998).

Key informant interviews with private music teachers, students, and parents helped me capture what I was unable to observe directly, to encompass multiple realities and perceptions, and to assist in interpretation (Bresler & Stake, 1992). All participants (i.e., Taiwanese Canadian teachers, students, and parents) engaged in two interviews, each lasting between one half-hour to two hours (with shorter periods for students). Informal interviews with teachers and students were conducted before each lesson to provide and clarify my summary of the previous lesson. These informal interviews lasted no more than 20 minutes. Questions for the first interview were developed from my own experience and the literature (see Appendix 4). Questions for the second interview were related to observations of the videotape. I used semi-structured interviews in both interview sessions. The interview questions and the schedule were used as a guide, allowing my key informants the freedom to express their interests and concerns while allowing me to pursue intriguing areas emerging during the conversation (Smith, 1995).

I recorded the interviews on a Sony Mini Disc recorder and transcribed them as a reference for the later analysis. The interviews were conducted in quiet places such as

private music studios, homes, or quiet cafés where participants felt comfortable about sharing their experiences.

**Other Data Collecting Activities.** An ethnographer serves as “a culture translator, always placing the insider’s perspective in the foreground and outsider’s perspective in the background” (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2002, p. 294). Communicating and interacting with participants helped me understand the language of the culture from their perspectives. Informal interviews with teachers and students were conducted before each lesson to provide and clarify a summary of the previous lesson. I encouraged participants in this research to contact me daily by telephone, in person, or by e-mail or online messages. The conversations were hand recorded, and the e-mails and online messages printed for later analysis.

In addition to interacting with participants, studying artifacts such as teaching materials and teachers’ notes provided me with further insight into the culture. As Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2002) suggested, ethnographers “unpack the stories that lie inside [artifacts] and understand the interplay between tradition and creativity. Objects carry traditions of form, function, and symbol: how they are made, how they are used, and what they mean to people” (p. 131). I also looked into artifacts (e.g., teaching materials and teachers’ notes) from the culture of the Taiwanese Canadian private music lessons as additional data.

Lastly, Spradley (1980) wrote that “the major part of any ethnographic record consists of written fieldnotes. And the moment you begin writing down what you see and hear, you automatically encode things in language” (p. 64). I carried a notebook/journal and a pen all the time so I could make field notes about what I observed as well as my thoughts about the research. Since I have poor penmanship, I regularly typed and

reorganized my field notes into the computer. This technique helped me identify the emerging topics from the study.

The languages used in the research were a mixture of Mandarin and English. Observations and interviews were conducted mostly in Mandarin because it was the language in which most of my participants showed the greatest ease. English was used to interview younger students because they seemed to understand and express themselves better in this language. I transcribed interviews and observations in Chinese, the original language of most interviews and observations. I then translated Chinese text into English. Because of the different expressions in the two languages and because I am not a professional translator, I had to insert additional English paraphrases into the quotations in order to convey the original meaning from Chinese. Both the Chinese and English versions were approved by the participants.

To sum up, the research activities included: observations of the private music lessons of five Taiwanese Canadian teachers, students, and their parents; interviews of five Taiwanese Canadian teachers, students, and parents about their experiences of studio music lessons; daily interaction and communication between the participants and me; examination of cultural artifacts; and journaling.

### **Analyzing the Data**

To do qualitative analysis is to understand the content and complexity of the meaning of the data rather than to measure or test the data (Moustakas, 1994; Smith, 1995). As Moustakas (1994) wrote, methods in human science research are open-ended. There is, to date, no definite method or requirement for each methodology. The method of data analysis is open-ended.

As mentioned previously, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended inductive analysis for qualitative research. “Inductive analysis...begins not with theories or hypotheses but with the data themselves, from which theoretical categories and relational propositions may be arrived at by inductive reasoning processes” (p. 333). Lincoln and Guba also wrote that naturalist inquirers tend to use a generative approach when analysing data: “Generative inquiry attempts to discover constructs (which may lead to propositions or hypotheses) using the data themselves as a point of departure” (p. 333). Furthermore, constructive analysis, “a process of abstraction whereby units of analysis are derived from the “stream of behaviour” (p. 334) is used instead of enumerative (counting) analysis. Lastly, the naturalistic data analysis is subjective because it reconstructs participants’ concepts based on their experiences and worldview, even though the interpretation can provide surprising (but nonetheless acceptable) insights to both participants and researcher.

“Analyzing qualitative data is a systematic process that organizes the data in to manageable units, combines and synthesizes ideas, develops constructs, themes, patterns or theories and illuminates the important discoveries of research” (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998, p. 131). Spradley (1980) further explains that “in ethnographic inquiry, analysis is a process of question-discovery. Instead of coming into the field with specific questions, the ethnographer analyzes the field data compiled from participant observation to discover questions” (p. 33). Therefore, as Spradley suggests, I analyzed my data after each period of fieldwork in order to know what to look for when I next entered the field. The analysis strategies of this research were mainly based on Spradley (1980) and Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2002). In this study, three steps were taken in the process of ethnographical analysis for all the data: description, analysis, and interpretation (Creswell,

1998). I used the computer software program ATLAS.ti for data storage. ATLAS.ti is a code-based theory and conceptual network builders program (Berg, 2004). I used it, however, mainly to code, sort, and organize my data. I did the analysis manually. ATLAS.ti was language compatible so I was able to read, write, and code in both Chinese and English.

First, I organized my data (transcripts and records from interviews and observations, record of telephone/in person conversation, and my fieldnotes) into descriptive text. My task was to describe my field as accurately as I could, combining my informants' perspectives with my own (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2002).

Secondly, I applied qualitative content analysis to analyze all of my data. According to Berg (2004), in contrast to the reductionistic and positivistic view in which people usually associate content analysis with a quantitative approach, content analysis can also be used to qualitative research:

I argue here that content analysis can be effective in qualitative analysis— that “counts” of textual elements merely provide a means for identifying, organizing, indexing, and retrieving data. Analysis of the data once organized according to certain content elements should involve consideration of the literal words in the text being analyzed, including the manner in which these words have been offered. In this way, content analysis provides a method for obtaining good access to the words of the text or transcribed accounts offered by subjects. (p. 269)

I used Berg's Stage Model of Qualitative Content Analysis (Figure 4.1) as my guide throughout the analysis process.

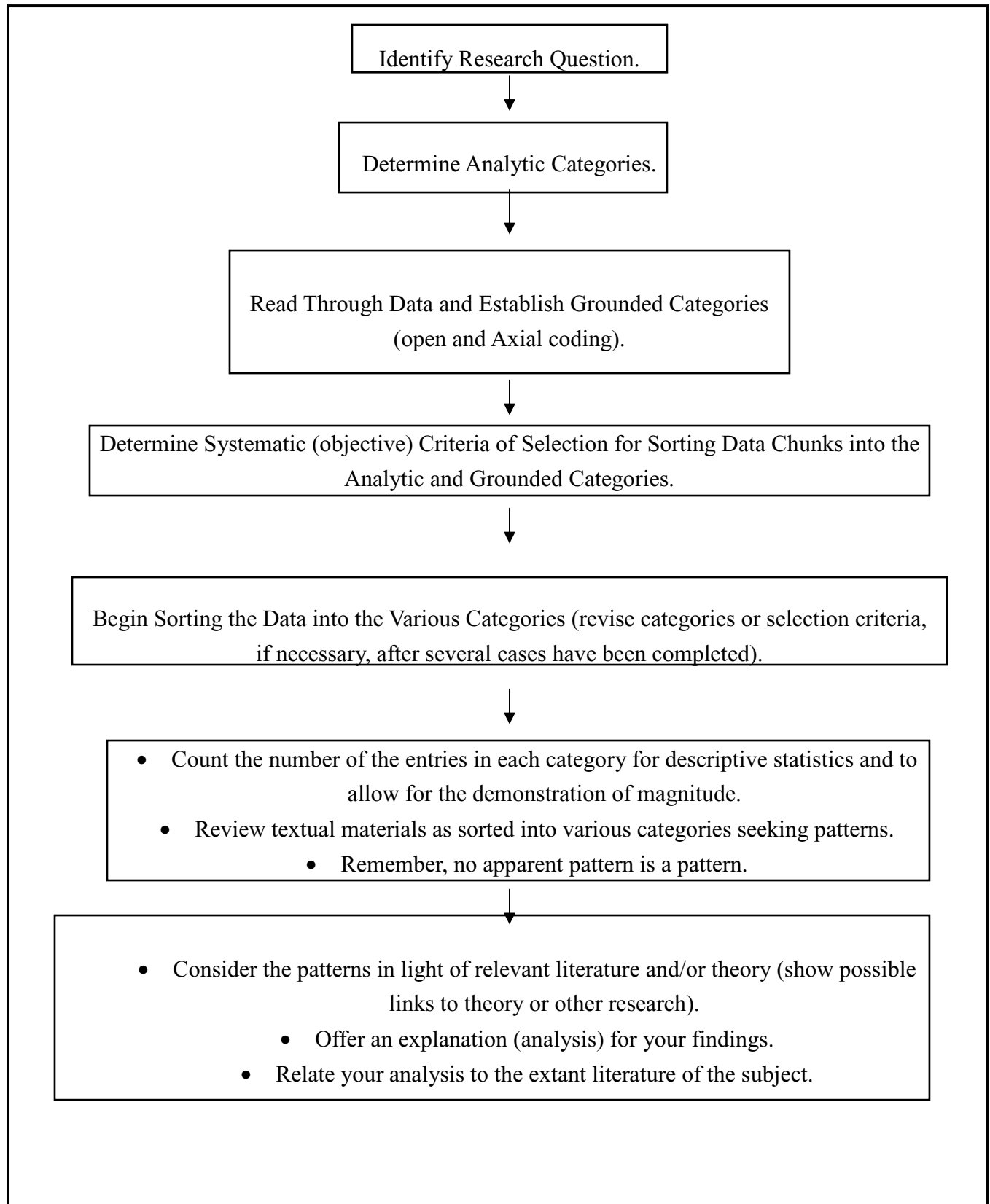
The analytical categories (i.e., context, teaching and learning experience, and cultural value) were first determined. These categories came from my research questions, interview questions, and my review of the literatures. The next three steps happened simultaneously. I read through the data while establishing grounded categories (i.e., non-verbal and verbal communications, gender, and parental involvement). At the same time as I was establishing the grounded categories, I also determined the objective criteria

for coding the data chunks and sorting them into the analytic and grounded categories. According to Berg (2004), the criterion is the specific statements, phrases or words which can be linked to the analytical and grounded categories. For example, one of my grounded categories was gender. Any time the words “boy” and “girl” or “woman” and “man” came up, I sorted them into the “gender” categories. The transcriptions of both formal and informal interviews were manually sorted and coded using ATLAS.ti. I color coded the data from the 20 private lessons and sorted them by hand (e.g., red for modeling behaviors; pink for a teacher giving directives). Moreover, categories and selection criterion were revised regularly during the coding and sorting process to ensure that my data chunks were assigned to the right categories. After sorting the data, I looked at the number of the data chunks under each category using ATLAS.ti. I then read and reviewed the text trying to find emerging patterns, topics, and themes.

The final step of my data analysis was interpretation. As I read through the data I also started to consider if my findings were related to an existing theory or previous research. I interpreted and explained my findings from the analysis according to the emerging topics and themes with reference to the extant related literature.

To conclude, describing, analyzing, and interpreting the data were the three steps that I took.

Figure 4-1 Berg's (2004) Stage Model of Qualitative Content Analysis (p. 286)



### **Trustworthiness**

Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are the four aspects of trustworthiness which I addressed in my study. I relied on triangulation, which is a process of using multiple data sources (teachers, students, parents, and literature references) and data collection methods (observation from video recordings, formal and informal interviews, interaction with participants, and making fieldnotes) to help eliminate bias and detect errors in order to establish credibility. In addition to triangulation, member check was another technique I applied in the study to assure credibility. The transcriptions and translations of the interviews and observations and the textual descriptions of the data were shown to the participants for their review and comments. In addition, the teacher participants each read their stories to check their accuracy. The techniques applied to credibility also apply to dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Because transferability depends on the readers' judgments of applicability, I provided a meaningful database through rich, thick descriptions for readers to make their own judgments.

### **Initial Limitation**

The participants were limited to Taiwanese Canadians living in Vancouver, British Columbia.

### **My position**

When doing fieldwork, researchers step outside to observe people and step inside of unfamiliar events and artifacts to examine them closely. They have the emic commitment to capture the perspective of the insiders in the culture yet, generally, they portray etic descriptions as outsiders (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2002). My position in this study



was as both a participant and an observer. According to Spradley (1980), the type of participation that I was involved in is the “Complete Participation” which means a researcher studies a situation in which she/he is already an ordinary participant. Because I was already a Taiwanese Canadian private music teacher, I had to be cautious about my position in this research because the more knowledge one has about a culture as an ordinary participant, the more difficult it is to study it as an outsider. In this case, I borrowed the concept of “bracketing or epoche” from phenomenology and applied it to my research. Bracketing is the process by which researchers set aside preconceived knowledge about the situation being studied in order to obtain the best understanding of human experience (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). Nevertheless, as I also wanted an insider’s point of view, I had to alternate roles between the insider and outsider alternatively and simultaneously (Spradley, 1980). I tried to be the outsider when I asked questions during the formal and informal interviews. I became an insider when I was writing the descriptions and bringing in some of my own experiences. However, there were times that I forgot my roles as an outsider when I was deeply immersed in my conversations with the participants. I sometimes assumed that I already knew the answers as an insider and forgot to ask further probing questions as an outsider. As a result, I often had to go back to the participants and talk to them to clarify the questions as an outsider.

I was unacquainted with Patricia, Frank, and the parent and student participants prior to their recruitment. Although I had encountered Lily, Lauren, and Sally before my study, my relationship with these teacher participants was merely professionally polite. While this relationship may have made the three initially more willing to participate in the research, it did not impact, so far as I could tell, on the findings. That all five teacher participants agreed to participate indicated an openness and curiosity about their teaching that may or

may not be typical of their peers. Beyond an anticipated nervousness during the videotaping of the first lesson, all the teacher participants were eager to discuss and share their life work.

I have discussed the methodology of this ethnographic study and concerns of trustworthiness. The next five chapters tell the stories of the Taiwanese Canadian private music teachers, students, and parents who participated in my study, one chapter for each triad. The stories are based on interviews, observations of teaching, informal conversations, and my journal.

## Chapter Five: An Obedient Child

*“I have always been an obedient child. I followed the words of my mother and teachers.”*

### Lily

Lily was already waiting for me when I stepped into the little Taiwanese eatery in Richmond. It was noon, and seats were quickly being occupied. The sound of Taiwanese pop music accompanied laughter and conversations in Mandarin and Taiwanese. The smell of fried rice noodles and meat chowder permeated the air. Lily greeted me with her gentle smile. She has shoulder length hair and a tiny figure. I had not seen her for almost 7 years, but she had not changed in appearance at all.

I met Lily during my undergraduate years at the University of British Columbia; she was in her senior year while I was only a freshman. She played flute, and I was in the string section, but we never conversed during the whole semester we were both in the orchestra. It was not until we formed a chamber orchestra for a CBC multicultural music competition that we got to know each other better. At the time I was actively involved in university clubs. Sometimes I organized charity concerts and invited Lily to be my guest performer. We would gather together with other friends for dinner and gossip about life. Although most of our friends were private music teachers, we never talked about teaching and learning at these social gatherings.

Lily replied to me immediately after she read the Letter of Invitation I had mailed to all the Taiwanese Canadian private music teachers on my list. She was in Taiwan attending her brother's wedding at the time but agreed to talk to me when she returned to Vancouver. We decided to have a reunion lunch before the interview and chose the Taiwanese eatery as the meeting place. Unfortunately, it was so noisy by the time we

finished lunch that it was impossible for me to get a clear recording of the interview, so we decided to move to a more suitable location. This time we chose a quiet Taiwanese tea house with Chinese traditional music playing in the background. Taking one sip of tea, Lily began her story.

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Lily is from a middle class family of five. She lived with her parents, younger brother, and younger sister in Taichung, a major city in the middle of Taiwan. Lily's father had established an architectural firm a few years after he graduated from university. Lily's mother was a math teacher who became a housewife after her children were born. As in most Taiwanese families, Lily's father paid more attention to "making a living," expecting his wife to assume the responsibilities of educating and taking care of their children. Although her father and the mother played different roles in their children's lives, they both enjoyed music and provided a positive musical influence for Lily and her siblings.

The sound of music often emanated from Lily's house. Lily's father did not play an instrument but he liked to listen to music; he collected many classical music tapes and played these tapes whenever he could. Lily was always around listening when her father turned on the cassette player. It was Lily's father who acquainted her with the world of classical music.

Lily's mother enjoyed music as much as her husband. She had a piano in the house and played the piano from time to time. She also loved singing. Karaoke singing was one of her favorite activities in her spare time. Since Karaoke songs were either traditional folk songs or popular songs of the time, this Karaoke singing activity indirectly provided opportunities for Lily to hear music other than Western Art music.

Although Lily grew up in an environment where extensive listening to music was the norm, she did not play an instrument until age 5. Since Lily's mother played piano herself, she believed that learning to play the piano would enhance her children's musical abilities such as listening skills, sight-reading skills, and musicality. At age 5, Lily and her younger brother were sent for their first piano lessons. As do most Taiwanese five-year-olds, Lily and her brother obediently followed their mother's will.

According to her recollection, Lily and her brother's first piano teacher was a rigid person. She was strict and structured about her students' playing technique. She rarely smiled in front of her students. Furthermore, she expected her students to practice well at home and come prepared for their lessons and she punished students who did not meet her expectations. Luckily for her, Lily was a responsible elder sister who obediently did what she was told. Even though she did not find piano her favorite activity at the time, she voluntarily practiced every day after school thus meeting her teacher's expectations. As a result, she experienced neither negative comments nor punishment from her teacher. Lily's brother, on the other hand, had the opposite experience. He could not sit still for the long practices and often went to piano lessons unprepared. As a consequence, the teacher was angry with him most of time. She would nag, yell, and sometimes hit Lily's brother with a feather duster. Lily's brother would cry, yell back, and return to the next lesson still without practicing. He was scared of the teacher but not scared enough to practice. After a while, he ended up discontinuing piano lessons. Research indicated that students' first private music teacher is a major factor for beginning students to continue with the private music lessons (Davidson, Moore, Sloboda, & Howe, 1998; Gembris & Davidson, 2002). Beginning students tend to prefer teachers with personal warmth over teacher competence (Davidson et al.). Personal warmth was not evident in Lily's teacher.

Although the teacher was remembered as a mean person, she was never mean to Lily because Lily obeyed. Lily studied with this first piano teacher until she went to junior high school.

At seven, Lily started her elementary school education at the Teacher's College Affiliated Elementary School of Taichung. She led the typical life of an elementary school child until Grade 5. It might have been because of her outstanding musical ability or excellent music grades from previous years that she was placed in a choral class by her school. This class was the school choir in competitions and performances. Every morning, Lily arrived at school early to practice singing. During lunch time, Lily and her classmates had to quickly finish lunch and go to a choral rehearsal. When a competition date approached, the children would stay after school to practice; sometimes they even needed to go to school on weekends to rehearse. Although Lily didn't remember much about her elementary life in the choral class, her experience in choral training provided a solid foundation for her later musical development.

In the first semester of Grade 6, Lily's mother heard about auditions for the Music Talent Program from her friends. Because her daughter was highly involved in musical activities, she decided her daughter should audition. She first talked to Lily's piano teacher and learned more details about the Music Talent Program. As they began to prepare for the audition, one of Lily's aunts, who happened to teach in the Music Talent Program, informed Lily and her mother that students in the Music Talent Program had to take an orchestral instrument besides piano. But what could Lily take? They consulted with the piano teacher. The teacher suggested that instruments such as cello or trombone would be too big for girls, while violin and flute would be more appropriate. However, most children who took string instruments in the program started early. Lily would likely

have a hard time catching up if she just began violin in grade 6. Woodwind instruments such as flute would be more suitable for Lily, the teacher said. After listening to the teacher's suggestion, Lily's mother decided to let Lily start flute lessons. As obedient as Lily had always been, she went to the lessons and started preparing for the audition.

As expected, Lily was accepted in the Music Talent Program of Stella Martutina Girls' High School in Taichung. Stella Martutina was a private school. Going to a private school costs money; the tuition fee was even higher for students in the Music Talent Program. Lily did not know how much her parents paid every semester; she did, however, remember that it took a huge amount of money for her to stay in the school.

Life in the Music Talent Program was busy. The Music Talent Program of Stella Martutina included weekly private music lessons, ear training, sight-reading, music theory, music history, music appreciation, and large ensembles such as orchestra and choir. Concerts and recitals were given regularly. In addition to all the music studies, the usual academic courses were also included: English, Mathematics, and Mandarin were mandatory. Other courses such as Physics, Chemistry, Geography, and History were also part of the curriculum. Nevertheless, as music subjects occupied the major part of the curriculum, the time for academic subjects was minimal.

Lily stayed in the Music Talent Program of Stella Martutina throughout her entire high school years (Grades 7 to 12). She studied both piano and flute with teachers appointed by the school. Every week, she went to the school practice room to have her one-hour lesson for each instrument. She participated in competitions and usually came back with good standings. Moreover, she enjoyed the big sound of the orchestral ensemble so much that she promised herself a career in flute performance one day.

Although Lily was happy with her studies in the Music Talent Program, she also felt that her career path was to some degree limited due to her involvement in the program. Having studied music intensively and paid less attention to regular academic subjects, she did not feel confident about taking the national examination for University entrance. Studying music in university seemed to be her only choice. A special university audition for students who were in the Music Talent Program was held at the end of Grade 12 year. Students could get into the university school of music directly without taking the National University Entrance Examination once they went through the audition. Feeling that music was her only choice, Lily took the audition and was accepted by the School of Music of the Taipei National University of the Arts.

It was only at the beginning of Lily's second year in the Taipei National University of the Arts that her family made the decision to immigrate to Canada. Having progressed considerably in her musical studies, Lily now faced a dilemma: Should she stay and finish her university degree in Taiwan or should she follow her family and resume her music studies in Canada? After pondering this dilemma for some time, Lily finally decided that it was more important for her to be with her family while at the same time taking advantage of an opportunity to continue her music education in another country. With that in mind, Lily was prepared for a big change in her life.

Lily and her family arrived in Vancouver, British Columbia in 1992 and settled in Vancouver. They moved to North Delta after the first year and eventually settled in Surrey in 1996. It was already mid school year when they arrived. Lily could not immediately get into any school without fulfilling her English proficiency requirements. Therefore, she took ESL courses from Capilano College and studied for the TOEFL examination. Meanwhile, as auditions for the School of Music at the University of British



Columbia were held in April for the following year, Lily had enough time to prepare for the audition. She found a flute teacher and started taking lessons; she studied the piano repertoire on her own. After she passed the TOEFL examination, she applied to the School of Music at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in January, 1993 and auditioned in April. Her solid musical training in Taiwan got her an acceptance letter from UBC in May. With some credits transferred from Taiwan, Lily enrolled in the second year music program majoring in flute performance in September, 1993.

Musical life at UBC was not much different from musical life in Taiwan. Lily took classes, private lessons, and participated in large and small ensembles. However, there were a few cultural differences that required adaptation. For example, the teaching approaches Lily's professors used in UBC were new to her. It might have been a pliant personality that made Lily an obedient child; she was used to being told what to do and follow instructions. She heeded her teachers' words and did exactly what her teachers wanted; whatever knowledge the teachers transmitted to her, she absorbed entirely like a super sponge. When Lily went to UBC, she realized that she had to become an independent thinker rather than be a follower. Instead of selecting a particular piece for Lily to practice, as did her teachers in Taiwan, Lily's flute professor at UBC provided Lily with a repertoire list that included music of various genres and styles. Lily had to choose which piece she would like to play then research the selection at the library before making a final decision. Making her own choices about what music to perform was something Lily had never done in Taiwan.

Lily also noticed cultural differences when attending her courses. Her music history teacher in Taiwan, for example, would distribute tests when s/he needed to see how much students recalled about the course materials. All a student needed to do in order to get a

good mark was to memorize the entire textbook. Lily was excellent at recall. The music history teacher in UBC, on the other hand, tended to give marks based on the result of students' term papers. Lily had never done a research-based paper before. For the first time, she learned about how to select a topic, find out about it at the library, and write about it. This was the time when Lily finally felt that she had become an adult who had the ability and freedom to think independently.

Despite the fact that Lily was busy adjusting to her new school life, she was not as happy as she had been in Taiwan. Although Lily had positive experiences in her private music lessons in UBC, she did not enjoy her involvement in the university orchestra. As mentioned previously, Lily's only goal since she had entered the Music Talent Program was to be a flautist in a professional orchestra. She chose flute as her major instrument because she loved and enjoyed the feeling and the atmosphere when playing it with the orchestra. However, Lily did not find that she experienced the same enjoyment when she was in the UBC orchestra. First, Lily did not have friends in the orchestra. She felt that there was a cultural barrier between her Canadian classmates and her. She was not interested in most of the topics that her classmates talked about and did not find the jokes her classmates made funny. She just did not fit in. Secondly, because of Lily's shy personality, she did not approach her classmates unless she was addressed first. Similarly, her classmates did not speak to her because they felt that she was unapproachable. As a result, Lily did not feel that she was part of the orchestra; rather than playing with the entire orchestra, she felt that she was playing by herself. Not much interaction between Lily and her fellow players occurred. She felt alone.

Lily's unpleasant experience in UBC orchestra changed her career goal; being a professional musician in an orchestra was no longer her priority. She started to look for

other career possibilities. In her junior year at UBC, one of her school elder sisters<sup>1</sup> asked if she could give flute lessons to a student. Lily thought it was a great chance to earn some money. Without hesitation, she answered “Sure!” The first student brought in the second student. The second student introduced Lily to the third student. Students started to call. And they soon found out that Lily was also a great pianist, so more students called for piano lessons. All of sudden Lily was busy teaching. This was the beginning of Lily’s life as a private music teacher.

To be honest, Lily did not want to be a teacher at first. She didn’t like teaching. However, music teaching was the only thing she could do to earn a living after graduating from UBC. She felt that she had no choice but to be a private music teacher. Fortunately, after few years of teaching, Lily realized that she loved seeing the progress of her students; teaching had become interesting. In another words, she gradually fell in love with teaching. “You learn when you teach” she said. She had finally decided that teaching was part of her life. Lily got married two years after graduating from UBC; her husband is a business consultant who continues to support Lily’s musical career.

Lily moved to China with her husband in fall 2005, working full time in an international school as a general music teacher and teaching music privately in her spare time. She became pregnant the following year. Having decided that Canada would be a better place for her child to grow up, she moved back to Vancouver in spring 2006. Her daughter Karen was born in fall 2006. Although Lily was teaching fewer students while learning to be a mother, it seems that her mission as a music teacher will continue no

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<sup>1</sup> In Taiwan, people in the same school are bonded like a family. Students treat each other as brothers and sisters. Those who are older in school are called elder sister/brother. The younger students are called younger sister/brother. A younger sister/brother respects and listens to her elder sister/brother. In return, elder sister/brother helps his/her younger sister/brother in many ways such as giving advice and providing academic help.

matter where she is or who she has become.

### **Mrs. Woo**

It was 2 pm when I pulled my car into Mrs. Woo's driveway; a girl was closing the garage door. As I was in the car, I did not have a clear view of the girl. I looked at my watch and started to wonder. Could this be the right house? The children shouldn't be home yet. It was too early. Hesitating, I rang the door bell. The "same" girl I had seen in the garage answered the door, but she was not a girl. She was, indeed, Mrs. Woo, one of Lily's students' parents. She is petite, with a very young appearance. She speaks with a soft voice and she smiles and giggles a lot. Although she claimed to be 44 years old, she looked like she was in her early thirties.

I was invited to sit in the living room. While I set up the recording equipment and got prepared for the interview, Mrs. Woo made tea in the kitchen. Her children were still in school. A small dog barked loudly in the kitchen. While Mrs. Woo brought out the tea, she explained that the dog was new to her family, and it got very excited whenever a stranger came. She sat down. I turned on the recorder. And we began talking.

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Mrs. Woo was born and lived in Taichung in the middle of Taiwan. After graduating from Providence (Jing-Yi) University, she went to Teacher's University and obtained a teaching certificate in computer science. She was a high school teacher for three years. When her second child was born, she quit her job and became a full time housewife. Mr. Woo is a dentist; they have three children – the oldest boy was 14; the middle girl was 13; and the youngest boy was 8.

The Woo family moved to Canada in July, 1997. Like many Taiwanese parents, Dr. and Mrs. Woo believed that moving to a country like Canada would provide a better educational environment for their children. The better educational environment could lead to promising career and life opportunities for their children. Considering that Mrs. Woo's English was not fluent, the Woo's family chose to live in Surrey, a part of Greater Vancouver where many Taiwanese people live. After the family was settled, Dr. Woo flew back to Taiwan to continue his dental practice. Mrs. Woo was left alone to care for her three children in a new country. Dr. Woo comes to Canada every three or four months to spend time with his family. He also communicates with his wife and children through daily phone calls and e-mails.

Neither Dr. Woo nor Mrs. Woo took music lessons when they were young. Mrs. Woo, in particular, did not have a very pleasant experience in her school music education. She used to envy her classmates who could play piano yet "I was afraid of music classes," she said. Apparently, teachers in Taiwan liked to evaluate their students by testing them. Mrs. Woo's school music teacher would play notes and ask her students to name the notes. Without proper ear training, Mrs. Woo could not give the correct answers. In addition, "my music teacher would ask us to sing in front of the whole class individually in order to grade us. I was afraid of singing because I was scared of singing by myself in front of the crowd." Despite her negative musical experience in school, Mrs. Woo enjoys listening to music: "I didn't have time to listen to music when we were still in Taiwan because I was always busy. When life settled down after we moved here, when my kids were away in school, I wanted to have some noise when I was doing housework." Mrs. Woo prefers classical music or light instrumental music: "I don't know why. I just like the soft, quiet kind of music better." Although Mrs. Woo does not have much confidence in her singing

and is afraid to sing in public, “I will sing if my children ask me to teach them a song or sing a song with them when they bring home a new song from school.”

Having lived in Canada for five years, Mrs. Woo has noticed a difference between the educational beliefs practiced in Taiwan and in Canada:

Education here in Canada gives children more freedom. It is about creativity. In Taiwan, the teacher would teach/give you a lot of stuff. You came home to memorize it and went to school to write a test. Here is not like that. They give you a topic here. Then you have to find information and complete a project. I think this is the biggest difference.

Mrs. Woo also thinks that children who went to school in Taiwan are naturally more obedient:

They were used to being told what to do. They accepted whatever their teachers and parents told them. My two eldest, for example, they were obedient because they had received their education in Taiwan. They cared about how teachers and parents saw them. But my youngest is not like that because he has been educated here [in Canada]. He has his own opinions and he doesn't totally agree with what you tell him.

Unlike many Taiwanese parents who expect high academic performance, Mrs. Woo believes that EQ [emotional intelligence] is more important. She admitted that this change developed after she came to Canada. Instead of giving total attention to her children's academic work, Mrs. Woo now cares more about her children's individuality and hopes that her children will be more independent and sociable.

All three of the Woo children take private music lessons. The first son and daughter started their musical training in Taiwan. It was Dr. Woo's idea that music could be a means for people to express their emotions when they encounter obstacles in life. In other words, Dr. Woo thinks that music cures dark feelings. When this belief was passed on to Mrs. Woo, she came up with the idea that her children should learn music: “Everybody was doing it... My husband thought that if we gave our children a background in music, they would have somewhere to go when they are not in a good mood.” With that in mind, Mrs. Woo entered her eldest two children into Zhu Zhong Qing Percussion Band: “They

were too young to have piano lessons. I just want them to have an exposure in music first. And I thought doing percussion would help their rhythmic and musical sense. So when I saw the advertisement for the percussion band, I signed them up.” The Percussion Band was only the beginning of her children’s musical journey. After the children were old enough to play piano, they joined the Yamaha music program. The children were only in the Yamaha program for six months. It was mandatory for parents to accompany their children in the music classes, but Mrs. Woo had a difficult time: “I am incapable of doing music. I didn’t know how to help my children. I ended up sitting there for the whole time because I didn’t know music.” To solve the problems, Mrs. Woo switched her children to private piano lessons where she no longer had to sit in for the lessons.

Mrs. Woo did not know any private music teachers when she first came to Canada; therefore, she depended on her friends’ referrals. As she is not a critical person, she does not ask much from the teacher: “I don’t know music. So I don’t ask for much. I think that as long as my children get along with the teacher; they receive good instruction; the teacher knows what she is doing; then I am okay with the teacher.” Mrs. Woo heard about teacher Lily from her friends. Her children studied with Lily until Lily moved to China.

Besides piano, both older children take another instrument. The oldest boy plays clarinet; the second daughter plays flute: “My husband thinks that piano is the basic instrument in music. Because we were moving to a new country, it might be advantageous to our children to be given a second instrument. That’s why they started to take lessons on the second instrument six months before we moved to Canada.” It seems that Mr. Woo was highly involved in making decisions about his children’s education: “My husband enjoys music and understands his children. Although he spends most of his time in Taiwan, we discuss every detail about our children. He is more sensitive than me

when we talk about children. Sometimes I feel like he is the boss giving out the order and I am the secretary who implements his order.”

Because it was her daughter Heather who participated in this study, we talked about Mrs. Woo’s role in her daughter’s piano lessons: “I didn’t need to worry about her at all. I didn’t need to look into my daughter’s music practicing because she did it voluntarily. I just sat there when she practiced. However, I had to push and remind my oldest and youngest boys when it was their turn.” Mrs. Woo does not expect her daughter to be a professional musician: “I just want her to enjoy music; then I will be happy.” She also thinks it is important for her children to learn about responsibility as an extrinsic benefit of taking piano lessons.

After Lily moved to China, Mrs. Woo found another teacher for Heather. She did not tell me much about this teacher because Heather hadn’t had a chance to have a lesson at the time of the second interview.

### **Heather**

I was already waiting in the living room when Heather walked in; I had just finished talking to her mother (Mrs. Woo). After bringing out another cup of tea for Heather, Mrs. Woo retreated to the kitchen. Heather is a tall, slim 13-year-old girl. She spoke quietly, with a timid smile. As she is shy and accustomed to giving yes and no answers, I had to encourage her to tell me more about herself. Here is what I learned.

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Before moving to Canada, Heather went to Chung Guan elementary school for two years. Since she was really young at that time, she did not remember much about her elementary school life in Taiwan. Her impressions of the Taiwan elementary school,



however, were: “The school was big and crowded; the teacher was strict, and we had a lot more homework than here.” Heather attended Grade 3 when she first moved to Surrey. She thinks that “the school here is more relaxed. It’s not that strict...I like the school more here.” Heather’s favorite subject in school is art. She dislikes social studies because she does not like memorization. She has an almost straight A report card with the only B in physical education.

Listening to music is one of Heather’s favorite activities. When she was younger, she liked to listen to piano music. Since she came to Canada at a young age and has adapted to the Canadian culture very well, it was surprising to find out that Chinese popular songs are her favorite type of music rather than the North American pop music listened to by most Canadian children her age.

Heather started her private music lessons early in Taiwan. At six, she participated in the Yamaha keyboard program. After a year in the program, her mother switched her to private piano lessons. She had two years of private piano lessons in Taiwan then she studied piano with Lily in Canada. Besides piano, Heather also plays another instrument. Based on her mother’s suggestion, Heather began taking flute lessons just before she left Taiwan. Once Heather found out that Lily also taught flute, she started taking flute lessons with her. Currently, she is preparing for the Royal Conservatory of Music Grade 8 piano examination. She prefers pieces that have a faster tempo because she likes music with a lot of action.

Practicing is a routine in Heather’s life. She practices four days a week and plays for an hour each time. She usually plays piano right after she finishes her school homework. When she practices, she plays in a certain order: repertoire first then studies; as she thinks scales are boring, she plays them last. When learning a new song, she first plays the piece

hands separately and, once she has mastered both hands, puts the two hands together. Heather thinks that the purpose of practicing is to prepare for lessons, to improve her technique, and for “amusement.”

When talking about what kind of private music teacher she likes, Heather answered: “Not too boring...Giving interesting lessons...Teach me many techniques...and she has to be relaxed but not too relaxed.” She thinks that both her teacher and parents expect her to practice well and follow the teacher’s instructions. Furthermore, Heather likes having music lessons because “it’s fun and basically I like music.”

Heather wants to be a dentist like her father when she grows up: “A dentist makes a lot of money.” She added: “Because my father is a dentist, it’s convenient for me to learn from him.” In conclusion, while Heather likes music a lot and music will be her life long interest and personal hobby, it will not be her career.

### **Music Lessons**

As I walked towards Lily’s townhouse in south Surrey, I heard the sound of advanced piano playing. It was quiet, peaceful, with the sound of the piano wafting through the neighborhood. The door was unlocked. Not wanting to disrupt a lesson, I quietly entered the house and located the sound source. Lily was practicing in her studio in the basement; she stopped playing when she saw me. After few words of greeting, I started to set up to video record the first of Lily and Heather’s piano lessons, which was to begin in 30 minutes.

Lily’s studio has a warm, comfortable feeling. Soft yellow light gently flows through the room. The walls are white, and the floor has a grey carpet. Her Yamaha grand piano occupies one third of the room. One chair is placed at the right side of her piano; this is

her chair. A desk sits across from the piano with a floor lamp standing to its right. Behind the piano is a shelf containing sheet music, music theory books, and other teaching materials. A CD player, an MD recorder, and stereo amplifiers are also placed on the shelf. As the desk across from the piano is used for writing and theory lessons, there is another shelf placed near the desk for more books and writing tools. More shelving space covers the upper wall facing the piano. Family photos as well as video tapes are displayed there. Underneath the wall shelves are two more chairs. An impressionistic painting of Monet hangs on wall. I was curious about Lily's selection, and she explained: "I like impressionistic music. I use that painting to explain about impressionistic music to my students."

There was still time after I finished setting up all my equipment. As I scanned the studio trying to preserve a sense of the room, I realized that it was easier for me to connect with Lily's earlier verbal descriptions of her teaching as I stood in her studio. I had been trying to imagine Lily's approach to teaching from the interviews but I had not been very successful. It was hard to formulate a picture of her teaching without seeing the actual space where she teaches and the way she interacts with her student. Seeing her in action, clarified her words.

Lily has been a private music teacher since her junior year in UBC. She teaches piano, flute, and music theory and works six days a week, with Mondays off. Lily teaches mostly at her home studio in Surrey. However, for the convenience of her students living in Vancouver, Lily schedules their lessons on one day and drives to these students' houses weekly: "I used to live in Vancouver. I took [these Vancouver students] at that time.... It is a long distance for them to commute to my house now that I have moved.... And I don't want to give up these students in case I have to move back to Vancouver one day.

It's hard to get new students. That's why I keep the old ones." Her teaching life is busy; Lily has more than 30 students. Most of them are Taiwanese Canadians or of Chinese descent. On her teaching days, she works from 3 o'clock in the afternoon to 10 o'clock at night — with no breaks. One might say that 7 hours of work is nothing; most people work 8 hours per day. However, a private music teacher needs to sing, talk, and interact with students constantly throughout lessons (Colprit, 2000); seven hours of straight teaching is energy draining.

Nevertheless, Lily is not content with her busy teaching life. She also performs, to preserve her identity as a musician. She was performing in a musical organized by a Chinese media group in Vancouver when I interviewed and observed her. She has to re-arrange lesson times to fit rehearsals and performances into her tight schedule. She is also in her final semester of the master's program at UBC. So along with time for performing and teaching, she has to find precious minutes for studying. Instead of feeling stressed out in this tight schedule, Lily seems relaxed: "Yes! I am super busy...[but] I enjoy doing this." Luckily, Lily has a husband who is very supportive. He is a business consultant who works at home. As Lily is so busy being a music teacher, musician, and student, he takes care of most of the household chores, including cooking meals. "I don't mind doing all the housework. She is good at doing what she is doing. Let's just keep it that way," he explained. "Loving her is to support her in whatever ways I can." Lily's husband perfectly portrays a modern version of the Chinese proverb that "There is a man/woman behind every successful woman/man."

It is a tradition in the world of private music lessons that students take private music lessons once every week. Most of Lily's students have weekly one-hour lessons. Those who study two subjects, such as piano and flute or piano/flute and music theory, come to

Lily's studio once every week and spend two hours there. In addition to the weekly lessons, other activities have evolved from the private lessons. First, Lily organizes a student recital every year: "I want to provide a chance for students to perform and a chance for parents to listen to their kids. Some children rarely play in front of others unless they are in a recital." Lily assumes several roles in the recital. She is the organizer who sets the program; she books the recital venue and arranges the post recital tea reception. She is also the stage manager in charge of seeing that the program runs smoothly. As a teacher, she prepares students to perform. As a performer, she accompanies students and plays solo works. Besides providing a performance opportunity for children and a listening experience for parents, the recital also represents an achievement for Lily herself: "When I see my students performing on stage, I feel I have accomplished something."

The other activity that Lily's private music lesson involves is the preparation for music examinations. Most of Lily's students take the certificate music examinations offered by the Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM). Three examination sessions are scheduled throughout the year: Winter (December and January), Spring (May and June), and Summer (August). At the beginning of the school year, Lily discusses with her students their goals for the coming year. If students decide to take examinations, Lily teaches them the appropriate materials for the examination. Lily encourages her students to take examinations: "I think students need certain pressures. If they are not the self motivated types, they can lose interest after playing for a while... [The examination] serves as a pressure [force] to [push] students to get better." As Hallam (2002) described, taking music examination is one example of an extrinsic motivator for students. Lily also encourages her students to participate in school music ensembles and music festival for

the same reason:

I think any activity that exposes students to music is good for them. But you have to be careful with music festivals. Some children are very competitive. They might lose interest in playing an instrument if they lose a competition. I always communicate with these students before I send them off to the festivals... I tell them to remember that "I don't want you to win first place. I want you to have an experience of performing in front of others as well as listening to others perform." [My students] decide whether or not to compete in a festival. I never push them.

As taking RCM music examinations is a social norm among the Taiwanese

Canadian community, Lily uses the curriculum constructed by the Royal Conservatory of Music for those students who are interested in taking examinations. There are 11 grades in the system, culminating with the Associate of Royal Conservatory (ARCT) Diploma (Royal Conservatory of Music Examinations, 2008). The curriculum includes technique, studies, and repertoire from various periods of music history. Although Lily has used the RCM materials for more than 10 years, she did not like the system when she started teaching: "I thought the system was boring. I didn't like the RCM curriculum." Lily, however, has changed her attitude over the years:

[RCM] made changes over the past years. These are good changes. For example, they adjusted their piano syllabus and added more variety to the examination repertoire. Popular music and jazz music are now included... It was like pure classical music in their old syllabus, and now I see variety... I find myself liking their materials more and more.

Lily's view towards the RCM curriculum clearly shows her belief in presenting varieties of music styles to her students. According to research, implementing different varieties of music styles into the curriculum of private music lessons is one way of promoting student motivation (Cooper, 2001; De Vries, 2003; Duke et al, 1997; Siebenaler, 1997; Speer, 1994).

Sight-reading and ear training are also included in the RCM curriculum. According to Lily, sight-reading is an important skill in learning music: "If you can't sight-reading, you will never be able to practice by yourself. You will never be able to play an

instrument without a teacher. I think sight-reading is a must [for music learning.” In

contrast, Lily holds a different view about ear training:

To be honest, I would not teach ear training if it weren't for the examination.... [Ear training] is something related to the talent [of a child]. I have students who can't figure out what [a perfect fifth] is no matter how long I've taught them.... If they can still enjoy playing [piano] without taking ear training, why bother?

Most of Lily's students take Royal Conservatory of Music Examinations. Therefore, Lily uses the RCM materials extensively in her lessons. She also uses other supplementary materials: “I add some technical exercise books for piano students and some more repertoire for flute students according to their abilities.” For students who decide not to take examinations, Lily uses the materials that she is familiar with from her own teaching/learning experiences: “If they decide not to take examinations, which is a very rare case, then I use the materials that I have used before. For example, I use sonatas, sonatinas, and Chopin's nocturnes for older students.... I use different types of books [that I am familiar with] from my [past] experiences.”

As Ward (2004) described about the source of teachers' teaching strategies, based on her interview, I assumed Lily teaches the way she was taught in her use of teaching materials. She later confirmed that my assumption was correct: “I can only teach what I have studied [material wise].... It is only in rare cases that I teach pieces that I am not familiar with...sometimes I teach pieces that I have never played up to grade ten level. I don't think I can teach advanced pieces without [having personally studied them] first.” Lily also agrees that her teaching has been influenced by her teachers: “[I teach the way I was taught] when I talk to my students about how to interpret a music passage and how to practice a certain passage.” Ward, however, identified that teachers also learn how to teach from their teaching experience. Lily thinks that she does more than mimicking her teachers when teaching: “I have learned how to teach from years of teaching

experience.... When I [discover] an effective way of playing [during my own practicing], then I tell my students.”

All of Lily’s private music teachers were significant to Lily. Their strongest impact was on her performance technique. Thanks to their many contributions and her own work, she learned to produce quality sounds on her instruments as well as the ability to interpret music. Long after graduating from university, Lily still remembers one of her flute teacher’s words about how to produce good music:

We were discussing about how to express music and my teacher said: “it doesn’t really matter [how you play it]. As long as it sounds good, it’s good playing.” These words had a big impact on me.... There are times that I don’t know what to do [when interpreting music]. Then I think about my teacher’s words and just follow my sense of rightness. If I think the music sounds good, then it’s the [right] way to interpret it.

Besides performance technique, Lily also learned a positive attitude from her teachers: “I am lucky that all my private music teachers had positive attitudes [towards music]. They always encouraged me. They were clear with their expectations of me so I knew what to do. I learned a lot from them.”

Although Lily performs regularly in the Vancouver community, she sees herself more as a music teacher rather than as a musician: “I see myself as a music teacher. I am a patient teacher. I am very nice. I am [serious], however, [when I teach music].” As a teacher, Lily believes that the purpose of music teaching is “to teach students how to appreciate and enjoy music.” Her role as a music teacher, thus, is to keep students interested in music learning:

Music is a fantastic thing. Everybody should be able to enjoy it in their own way. My students are fortunate that their parents are willing to spend money to nurture this interest. My job is to encourage and promote students’ talents. Each individual has a different talent. Some are very artistic. Some are stronger in logic. I work with them and choose the music materials according to their talents.

Nevertheless, no matter how enthusiastic Lily is to her job as a teacher, she still encounters obstacles in teaching. Among the difficulties that Lily has met, motivating



students to practice is the most difficult:

To motivate each student according to his or her individual personality is very difficult for me. Some students, for example, do not study music because they enjoy it. They do it because their parents force them. I find it's really hard to motivate these students to practice. This is the most difficult task that I have faced so far.

After teaching for more than ten years, Lily started to feel that she had reached a plateau in her teaching. Her background in instrumental performance no longer satisfied her desire to improve her teaching. She subsequently decided to enroll in a master's program in music education: "I wanted to give my students more. I wanted to find more ways to help my students. That's why I decided to go for the education degree." Like many private music teachers with performance backgrounds, Lily was unaware of professional resources such as educational journals or books before she began her graduate program: "I had neither knowledge nor contact with all this professional reading before. I didn't know about the abundant resources for teaching until I was in the education program." The master of music education program in which Lily enrolled emphasized general school music education. Lily, however, had hoped to learn more about the practical pedagogical methods of private music teaching when she began the program:

The program didn't help me much in terms of pedagogical methods in [piano teaching]. For example, it did not show me how to correct students' hand positions... I think the program more or less influenced my concepts about teaching rather than the practical things.

Lily thinks that this master of education degree has changed her teaching indirectly by promoting more thoughtfulness about pedagogical issues. Although she could not clearly indicate what those changes are, she stated that her experience in the program reinforced her belief that music is "for everyone to enjoy and not only for those who are musically talented." In another words, everyone should have a chance to learn music. Music should

not be a subject for the select few.

In addition to her graduate studies, Lily occasionally attends various music workshops sponsored by The Royal Conservatory of Music as another means of self improvement. She did not discuss music workshops very much during her interview mainly because she had been too busy to attend recent sessions.

Lily does not hold a positive opinion about participating in a professional music teacher's association:

I think it's a waste of money... My friends are in the association and they don't get any benefit from joining it. So I decided not to join... after all, you have to pay the annual fee right? I don't need to get students through it. So I think it's a waste of money.

I was struck by Lily's words because I once held a similar opinion. I had not found it necessary to join the British Columbia Registered Music Teachers' Association (BCRMTA) until I started this study. As we waited for Heather to arrive, my mind wandered.

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There were several reasons that I had not joined the BCRMTA earlier: First, although I had heard about the Association, I did not understand its purpose. Secondly, not many of my fellow private music teacher friends had joined it. If they had, we never talked about it. Thirdly, my early understanding of the Association from friends who had joined, was that the Association was a way of getting more students as well as of promoting oneself. As I had never worried about getting enough students, I had not bothered to look into the Association. Indeed, the Music Teachers' Association seemed foreign to me. When I first started my research, however, I needed to put aside my biases and try to see the world of private music teaching as an outsider. I realized that, as an ethnographer, I needed to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the many

facets of my field of study. As a result, I joined the BCRMTA intending to look at the culture with peripheral vision as Bateson (1994) described and trying to experience the culture as an outsider.

The BCRMTA is a non-profit organization of private music teachers formed in 1947. There are currently over 1000 members in 22 branches across British Columbia, Canada. Members of BCRMTA are linked provincially through branches as well as nationally through the Canadian Federation of Music Teacher's Association. As the BCRMTA website states, the objectives of the association are "the promotion of the art of teaching and standard and maintenance of the honor and interests of the music teaching profession" (British Columbia Registered Music Teacher's Association, 2008). Meetings and workshops providing platforms for teachers to share ideas and gain knowledge are held regularly. Public recitals are organized by the Association to give students of members more opportunities to perform for the public and listen to each other. Members' names are included in a list categorized by branch on the official BCRMTA website as a resource for people seeking private music teachers. Certain criteria must be met for membership: one must be over the age of 18 and have a music performer's diploma or degree with at least four years of teaching experiences. All members need to pay an annual fee and attend at least one meeting to maintain membership status.

After mailing in the application form, proof of degrees and diplomas, reference letters from former students, and program notes from student recitals, I was accepted as a member of BCRMTA. Meetings are held every two months at a local church. Most of teachers at my branch who attend meetings are piano teachers. Therefore, workshops are usually oriented towards piano pedagogically related issues such as how to prepare students for RCM examinations or discussions about certain Canadian piano works.

People from the association are kind, supportive, and encouraging. I have improved my teaching as a result of attending workshops; I learn about other private music teachers through reading the Association's newspapers and listening to others' experiences; and I also get to share my own experiences. I feel included. I feel that I am part of something bigger and I belong. I am no longer an isolated private music teacher stuck in a basement studio all by myself. In addition to all the changes that I have felt, I have indeed been getting more students ever since I joined the Association because parents are able to find me through the BCRMTA website. My attitude towards the Association changed after I began to understand more about it. As a result, while Lily explained her views, I could not help but wonder if Lily might change her mind if she became a member.

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"Hello!" Heather's greeting pulled me back from my thoughts. Her mother had just dropped her off. It was time to begin Heather's lesson. I pushed the record button on the video recorder and quietly left the room to wait in Lily's living room up stairs. The lesson began.

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I observed four of Heather's lessons between April and May 2005 during the time of the Kiwanis Music Festival and before the May-June examination session of the Royal Conservatory of Music. Heather was involved in both activities so I witnessed the final part of her preparation process. Heather was taking Grade 8 piano with the RCM. Her lessons mostly followed a typical sequence: technique (scales, arpeggios, chords...etc.), either studies or repertoire, and if there was time at the end of the lesson, sight-reading and ear training. Like the roles of teachers described by West and Rostvall (2003), throughout the four lessons, Lily was the initiator, the one who used verbal

communication and singing to issue commands, ask questions, provide explanations, and present models. In contrast, Heather played a much more passive role; she mainly responded to her teacher with short sentences and playing.

The first lesson was recorded a week before Heather's competition in the Kiwanis Music Festival. The entire lesson was therefore spent on preparation for the competition. After a short greeting from Lily followed by a smile from Heather, the lesson began. Lily sat on a wheeled chair at the right side of the piano. She moved the chair away from the piano when she listened to Heather's performance and closer when she gave instructions. The first eight minutes were spent on technical warm ups. Lily randomly picked different keys from the Grade 8 RCM piano syllabus. Heather played major and minor scales, chromatic scales, broken and solid chords, and arpeggios. Lily gave suggestions about hand positions, placement of feet, and use of fingerings. When these suggestions were made, Heather stopped what she was doing to make corrections until she satisfied Lily.

After the technique segment, the student and teacher moved to the next one without any announcement. They appeared to have a tacit mutual agreement about the sequence of the lesson. When Lily said, "Let's do the whole thing. Start from the beginning," Heather immediately stood up and walked away from the piano. She walked to the entrance of the room and waited there for a few seconds. Then, she walked to the front of the piano from the entrance, bowed, and sat down to play. Heather played the "Etude Allegro" by Yoshinao Nakada. It was a fast, exciting piece with a beautiful melodic section in the middle. I was surprised to hear the detailed musical expression that Heather was capably showing. It was an enjoyable listening experience for me. Meanwhile, Lily sat far away from the piano with Heather's print music on her lap and a pencil in her hand. She listened attentively and occasionally made notes on the score. After Heather finished

playing the piece, she stood up, took another bow, and walked away. As a musician, I am very familiar with the process of going on and off stage. I learned the proper stage etiquette from listening to my teachers and watching others. Often, my teachers would remind me of this etiquette before an actual performance. However, none of this etiquette was ever specifically mentioned in my lessons. I was surprised to see that Lily is building stage etiquette for her students by engaging them in mock performances during lessons. When I later inquired about her reasons, Lily answered: “I read somewhere when I was doing my school work that if we [teachers] make the whole stage performing experience a routine for students, stage fright will likely be reduced. I have implemented this routine in my lessons ever since.”

After the first play through of the “Etude Allegro,” the teacher and student broke the piece into sections and began to work on details. As Heather is able to play the piece fluently, most of the feedback emphasized increased musical expression: improving dynamic, balancing tones, and controlling the sound produced. Lily gave suggestions like “soft here! loud! longer note here!” while Heather changed the way she played according to Lily’s words. A lot of repetition happened in attempts to perfect a phrase or achieve more nuance with a certain dynamic level. Although Lily was the one giving most directives, she also tried to include some discussion in her lessons. For example, Lily asked questions such as “How do you play this loudest note in the piece?” and “Which note did you play wrong?” Heather usually replied with simple words like “push it” or “It’s D”. When Lily received terse replies, she continued talking and expanded on what she wanted Heather to do. It is interesting that attempts at discussion usually ended up as teacher-dominated talk, confirming a finding by West and Rostvall (2003). As an obedient child, Heather is used to being told what to do. It seems that Heather is used to

this kind of interaction.

The rest of the lesson was spent on fine tuning the details of the “Etude Allegro.” At the end of the lesson, Heather asked her teacher what to wear for the festival; her mother wanted to know. Lily first explained about the need to dress up for the performance: “I think everyone will dress up nicely. You might feel weird if you don’t do the same. Do you want to wear skirt, dress, or pants?” Heather said: “I don’t know.” Lily then continued with her suggestions: “If you are not feeling too cold, then you should wear skirt... and bring a warm jacket with you when you are waiting for your turn.” With an “okay” reply from Heather, the lesson ended.

I recorded the second lesson two weeks later. I was caught up in the traffic and was thus late for the video recording. Heather was already playing technique when I arrived. In contrast to the previous lesson which was spent entirely on the preparation for the Kiwanis Music Festival, the second lesson went back to the regular RCM curriculum. After the technique portion, the teacher and student worked on four pieces from various historical periods. Lily always let Heather play through a piece before she made any comment. While Lily listened to the play-through, she wrote her comments by way of marks on the score. These marks are a kind of stenographic set of indications meaningful to literate musicians. The marks indicate such items as phrasing, dynamics, tempo, and articulation. Then the teacher and student worked on the details according to Lily’s markings. Instead of Lily teaching according to a specific plan, I noticed that Lily often reacted in an ad hoc fashion when she taught. There is, however a fixed process: She listened to Heather’s playing, stopped Heather when she heard a problem, fixed the problem, and resumed listening until she heard another problem. The teaching strategy is similar to the zone of proximal development identified by Vygotsky (1932). This teaching

pattern continued throughout the four lessons I observed.

The last 15 minutes of the second lesson were spent on ear training. Lily switched seats with Heather. Lily sat on the piano bench while Heather sat on the other chair facing away from the piano keyboard. Lily started ear training by reminding Heather how to identify a cadence: “What should you listen for when we are identifying cadences? Which notes should you listen to? You listen to the second to last chord in the phrase. If the notes belong to the chord on IV, what cadence is it? If it’s a V to I, what cadence is it?” As I had come to expect, Heather answered her teacher with simple answers like “Listen to the top and the bottom note,” “Plagal!” and “perfect!” Next they did the melody playback. Lily named a key and played a melody in that key. They switched seats, and Heather played back the melody from memory. This task is easy for Heather. She played back the melody flawlessly. Interval naming is the other listening category for ear training. Apparently, Heather either dislikes listening to intervals or this is something at which she does not excel. At the beginning of this exercise, Lily said: “Let’s do the [most dreaded thing] right now.” Her comment implied a negative feeling towards this exercise. As mentioned before, Lily does not think ear training is necessary and would not do it if it were not part of the RCM curriculum. Heather also told me that she thinks ear training is the most difficult thing in her lessons. To me, ear training seems to be a routine they must do because of the examination system. It’s not something enjoyable for either the student or the teacher.

Both cadence and interval listening exercises involve more than merely listening. Students have to have enough knowledge of music theory to be able to analyze what they hear. For example, when Lily plays the interval of A to F, Heather has to have enough knowledge to understand that the distance between A and F is a sixth and the quality of



the interval is called “minor.” Instead of just getting the response “minor sixth” from Heather, Lily asked her to name the two notes that she had heard: “If you can hear A and F, you will [calculate] so you know it’s a minor six.” When Heather asked, “Do I have to calculate [after I hear the notes?]” Lily answered: “If you don’t want to calculate, just think on the key of A major. [All the intervals in a major scale should be either perfect or major]. The F in the A major should be a sharp. And this is not. So this is a minor interval.” Actually, asking Heather to name the two notes suggests that Lily is training her students to develop perfect pitch. And her later explanation on the intervals shows that Lily tries to incorporate music theory into the ear training.

I received a phone call when I was driving to Lily’s house for the third lesson. Lily called. She told me that Heather had a school concert that night and they had to tentatively reschedule the lesson half an hour earlier. As I lived 45 minutes from Lily’s home, they had to start the lesson without me. As a result, I was only able to record the second half of the third lesson. For the first two lessons, I set the camera across the room opposite the piano so I could have a clear view of teacher and student interaction. However, from that camera angle, I was unable to get detailed facial expressions of Lily because she often sits with her body facing the piano and her back facing the camera. This time I decided to try a different recording position to see if I could read her face better. Instead of setting the camera in the open space across the room, I squeezed the camera and the tripod into a space on the left side of the piano. The camera was adjusted so I could see both Lily and Heather’s faces. The down side of this new camera position was that I had a limited view of their hands and actions.

Lily and Heather continued working on perfecting the materials for the Grade 8 RCM examination during the third lesson. During the last 20 minutes of the lesson, Lily

asked Heather to play through all the pieces for her examination. This request resembled a mock examination without the ear test and sight-reading. Lily marked the score while listening to Heather play all her selections from memory. After Heather's performance, Lily stood up and put music back on the piano. Then she started to explain the details that she wanted Heather to fix for each piece. She also encouraged Heather by pointing out the sections with good interpretation. The words she used in her praise were specific about Heather's playing: "You did a good job here" and "Excellent sound! You played better than last time." Heather still remained quiet, as usual. This time, however, I was able to see the smiles on her face when her teacher complimented her.

The fourth lesson was recorded one week before Heather's examination. This time I was neither late nor distracted by a schedule change. I was able to record the entire lesson. This lesson served as the final review for the RCM examination. As usual, the teacher and student started with technique then proceeded to playing through the repertoire, fixing the details related to musical interpretation, and practicing sight-reading and ear training. This was the first time in the four lessons that I saw Lily and Heather practice sight-reading. Lily first gave Heather a short segment of music. Heather read the music for 30 seconds and started playing. Lily treated this exercise as a mock examination: "I really want to give you a perfect mark. Unfortunately I think there are two mistakes. So out of 7 I'll give you 6.5. That's a great sight-reading. And I think you chose the speed wisely. I don't think it was too slow." Next, Heather sight-reading a rhythmic pattern. She looked at the pattern for 20 seconds and clapped the rhythm. When she had trouble with one of the rhythms, Lily stopped her and showed her what was wrong. Then the teacher and the student clapped the same rhythm again together. Lily graded Heather through the entire sight-reading test and ear test. She graded Heather by using the RCM grading

system from the piano syllabus. Grading helped Lily understand what more needs to be done for Heather's preparation for the examination.

Similar to Dickey (1991) and Siebenaler (1997)'s findings, instrumental modeling played a significant role in Lily's lessons. Lily frequently modeled fingering, tone color, articulation, rhythms, accidentals, duration of notes, dynamics, shaping phrases, and the overall feeling of the music over the four lessons. She sang often — to represent a musical phrase, to identify correct pitches, to show the shape of the melody, to conduct the rhythm/tempo, and to demonstrate a certain dynamic level (Rose & Buell, 1998). Body language was also involved. Movement to the music showed that Lily was able to understand Heather's musical interpretations such as the phrasing and shaping of a piece. Pointing to music with her finger helped indicate problems that needed to be fixed. Gestures helped emphasize her points as she spoke. Furthermore, facial expressions such as smiling and frowning conveyed the teacher's expectations, approval, and disapproval and Heather's response to the teacher without words.

Lily passed practice strategies to Heather in a subtle way. Instead of saying "This is how you should practice," Lily taught the strategies by using them during her lessons. For example, when Lily tried to get Heather to increase her playing speed to the desired speed for the examination, she first identified Heather's current metronome speed. Then she set a slightly fast tempo and asked Heather to play in the new tempo. Once Heather was able to play fluently at the new tempo, she set a higher goal on the metronome. Giving Heather a specific and manageable task, helped her gradually achieve the learning goals established by Lily. This goal oriented practice is called "deliberate practice" by McPherson and Renwick (2001). Lily is teaching "deliberate practice" to Heather in her lessons. Repetition was another practice strategy identified in the literature (Hallam, 2001;

Pitts et al., 2000a). When Lily wanted Heather to practice a phrase, she first demonstrated the phrasing, dynamics, tone color, or shaping of the melody. Then Heather tried to imitate her teacher until her teacher approved.

Practicing sections is yet another practice strategy Lily employed in her lessons. As mentioned before, Lily usually listened to her student play the entire piece and then worked on the details by breaking the piece into sections. When I asked Heather about her practice habits, she said that she practiced in sections, indicating that she is probably unconsciously picking up practice strategies from Lily. Another approach that Lily used in terms of conveying practice strategies to Heather was the use of questions. Instead of directly telling Heather what to do, Lily asked what Heather thought about how she could practice or solve a musical problem. Although Heather was typically quiet or answered in few words and Lily usually ended up answering herself, I still noticed that Heather took Lily's suggestions and fixed the problems over the four lessons I observed. Nevertheless, Lily does not know whether her students are practicing the way she suggests at home: "Honestly, I don't know if they practice the way I suggest they do. It's my responsibility to show them how to practice. But whether or not they do it at home is beyond my control."

Heather's mother (Mrs. Woo) always picked her up at the end of lessons. She typically arrived a few minutes before the lesson ended and waited patiently at the door for Heather to come up. Since Mrs. Woo did not come in to watch Heather's four lessons, I wondered how Lily lets her students' parents understand what she is doing with lessons and how their children are progressing. How do the teacher and parents communicate with each other? Lily talks with parents in person: "I talk to them when they pick up their

children. I seldom call them unless it's necessary." The students are often present when

Lily talks to their parents:

I use encouraging words such as "I think Heather played very well this week." I try to say positive things to encourage students when they are present. But [there are times] that I think the parents need to know what's wrong with their children. I say this to the parent: "I think Heather didn't practice much this week. [She needs to practice more] for next week." When the mother hears that, she will probably push her child more.

Lily calls her students' parents when she thinks that the content of the conversation is inappropriate for children. This usually involves serious issues that could hurt the children's feeling. Similarly, Heather's mother claimed that she rarely called Lily unless there was something major that she did not want her children to hear.

All teachers have expectations of their students and their parents. Out of curiosity, I asked Lily about her expectations. Lily expects her students "to fulfill whatever [she teaches] in the lessons." She also expects her students to practice before coming to the next lesson. "It's a waste of money for them to come to my lesson unprepared," she said. Apparently, Heather knows clearly what Lily's expectations are: "[My teacher] wants me to practice what she taught me." At the same time, Lily expects her students' parents to "encourage their children instead of pushing them to do unwanted things." She further explains that her students' parents expect her to "be a good and responsible teacher who teaches their children to play properly [in terms of playing techniques.]" Interestingly, Mrs. Woo's expectation of Lily is somewhat different from what Lily predicted. "I want the teacher to make my child happy. [It would be the best] for my child to go to the piano lessons gladly without feeling pressured." This difference in expectations shows that Mrs. Woo trusts Lily as a teacher. It also corresponds with Mrs. Woo's belief that EQ [emotional intelligence] is more important than achieving a high level of performance. Moreover, while Lily emphasizes progress in learning more, Mrs. Woo seems to want her

children to “feel good” about learning.

So far my story has been revolved around Lily’s teaching and the lessons. Actually, a large part of the learning in private music lessons takes place at students’ homes. Students’ learning when they practice and parents’ involvement in private music lessons all play significant roles in private music teaching and learning.

Heather is a child who does not need to be reminded to practice. She is a self regulator. According to her mother, Heather shows very high interest in learning music. This interest drives Heather to practice voluntarily. As a result, Heather’s mother is not very involved in Heather’s practicing: “I never have to remind or push Heather to practice. It seems that she is doing very well by herself.”

Heather spends approximately one hour each time she plays piano. She plays up to four hours each week: “I do not practice every day. I play four days a week. [I play more when I have time.] Sometimes when my homework gets too much, I don’t play at all.” Consistent with the research (Coffman, 1990), although Heather understands her teacher’s expectations about practice time, she does not always meet them: “[My teacher] wants me to play every day. And if I play every day, I don’t need an hour. A half hour would be enough. [But I like to practice longer].”

The only thing that Heather doesn’t enjoy that much is technique: “I don’t like playing scales because they are boring.” It is interesting to note that instead of starting to play technique as a warm up in her lessons, Heather addresses technique last. Maybe the idea of a warm up has not yet been stressed. As mentioned before, Heather practices the way her teacher teaches her in her lessons. She first practices new pieces hand separately. After she gets familiar with the notes and fingerings, she puts two hands together. She always starts the new piece slowly and gradually plays up to the desired tempo. Heather

“plays through the songs once. And if [I] make a mistake, I play the part until I get it right.” To Heather, the purpose of practicing is to prepare for lessons, to improve her technique, and for “amusement.”

I observed that Heather’s piano playing improved over the four lessons. Her playing style, level of musical interpretation, playing speed, and tone quality all progressed considerably over the two-month observation period. Maybe it is Heather’s shy personality or perhaps she is not used to reflecting on or sharing her thoughts with a relative stranger, but she only spoke briefly and vaguely about what she learned in the lessons: “I learned many different techniques and practice strategies. [I learned] about dynamics. [And my ears are trained.] I learned many things.”

Although Mrs. Woo does not participate in her daughter’s daily practices, she partakes in Heather’s music learning in several ways. She is the driver who takes Heather to the lessons, festivals, and school concerts. She pays for the lessons, instruments, and the music books. She is also the one who encourages her child: “Heather is going to the music competition next month. Sometimes she comes back from the lessons and she tells me that she is progressing. I say encouraging words to her and that makes her happy.” Furthermore, Mrs. Woo is a devoted fan: “Heather likes me listen to her... I am doing this more and more now because I know that makes her happy... I want her to know that I care about her.”

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Successful teaching and learning takes more than one person. The relationship between Lily, Heather, and Mrs. Woo seems to be built around the word “obedience.” As students, Lily and Heather were obedient to their teachers and parents. As a student’s

parent, Mrs. Woo respected and obeyed her daughter's private music teacher regarding her child's musical learning. And as a teacher, Lily assumed the role of an authority. A determined teacher, a supportive mother, and an obedient girl with high musical interest and aptitude provide one picture of a teaching triad.



## Chapter Six: A Friendly Companion

*“I am more like a friend to my older students.... There is not much distance between my students and me. They see me more like an older sister. They are close to me.”*

### Lauren

It was a quiet morning when I pulled into Lauren’s driveway. Her home is located in a quiet neighborhood in the southwest end of Vancouver. It was a sophisticated building with a Spanish-style roof among the modern designed houses. A yellow Volkswagen Beetle was parked in the driveway. I parked behind the Beetle, walked to the door, and rang the door bell. Lauren was my second participant. My last interview had taken place in a tea-house, but I did not appreciate the background noise. After talking with Lauren, we decided to have the interview at her home.

Lauren answered the door and invited me into her living room. She made tea and we chatted about life while I set up the recording equipment. Lauren is a cheerful 26-year-old woman who laughs a lot when she speaks. I met her when I was in my senior year at UBC when we both played *er-hu* (Chinese fiddle) in the Chinese Ensemble; she was younger than me, a sophomore. Although we performed in the same ensemble for a year, all we exchanged were polite social conversations. After I graduated, I completely forgot about Lauren until she found me on MSN two years ago. She wanted to attend graduate school and wanted to discuss her options. That was when we became reacquainted. Knowing that she teaches piano, I told her about my research, and she expressed an interest in my topic. After I showed her the Letter of Invitation, she agreed to participate in my study. Sitting comfortably on the soft couch sipping hot plum tea, I prepared to listen.

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Lauren is from a middle class family in Taipei, the capital of Taiwan. As a child, she lived with her parents and her older brother. Her father was a self-employed trader. Her mother was a housewife. As customary in Taiwan, while the man of the household worked to pay the bills, the woman took care of the children. The “taking care of the children part” also means that the woman was responsible for educating her children. As Lauren remembered, “my father didn’t bother with us. It was my mother who was responsible for our upbringing.”

Lauren’s mother is an outgoing person. It was she who influenced and nourished Lauren’s interest in music: “My mother likes singing. She used to join choirs. Oh! She did not work. She led a leisurely life, like a wealthy noble lady. She would go shopping, take floral arrangement classes, go to hair salons, or go to choir rehearsals. She would bring me along when she went to choir. I would sit there and listen.” Lauren’s mother could not afford instrumental lessons when she was young. The inexpensive way to practice music at that time was to join a school choir. Eventually, choir singing became her lifelong hobby. In addition, both Lauren’s parents enjoyed singing Karaoke. Traditional Taiwanese pop songs or folk songs were their favorites. Lauren’s mother even recorded her own Karaoke singing just for fun. Under her parents’ influence, Lauren listened to a lot of popular music as well as classical music when she was younger.

As Lauren’s mother was an adventurous person who tried to learn as much as possible, she passed her attitude on to her children. Both Lauren and her brother started private music lessons at a young age:

My brother was in the Chinese ensemble class in elementary school. He played Chinese flute and percussion.... He took lessons on many instruments such as violin, piano, electrical keyboard, and drums. I guess he had no patience and persistence. He would give up on the instrument after only a few months. He knew how to play

them but he was never good at any of them.

Lauren, on the other hand, had a different musical learning experience.

Lauren entered the Yamaha music program when she was in kindergarten and spent a year or so there. While she was in the program, the teacher told Lauren's mother that her daughter had a good ear for music: she was born with perfect pitch. Not wanting to waste her daughter's talent, Lauren's mother hired a private piano teacher to teach Lauren at their home. Lauren did not have a favorable impression of her first piano teacher:

She was mean. My mother told me that I used to stare at my teacher angrily during my lessons. You see, I am the kind of person who cannot take people being hard on me. I listen when you talk to me. She did not. She was mean. She would complain to my mother about me being lazy. And she would compare me with her other students. She had a bad attitude. I felt bad because of the way she talked to me.... We lived in a high rise, and most of her students were from the same building. She would say to my mother: "the girl upstairs practiced this much time and your daughter only practiced this much time." The more she talked to my mom, the less I wanted to play. I did not have a pleasant time with her. All my other piano teachers were great. I just don't like being pushed.

Knowing that Lauren didn't like being pushed, her mother had an interesting way of helping Lauren persist at taking piano lessons, in addition to financial support. Unlike other parents who insist that their children continue taking piano lessons, Lauren's mother let Lauren make her own decision about whether or not to continue. Therefore, instead of uninterrupted years of piano lessons, Lauren had two or three "breaks":

I had a tendency to give up when I encountered obstacles in my learning. When I faced a new level and things became harder, I was lazy. Then I would tell my mother that I didn't want to take piano anymore. Mother would say okay and she would tell the teacher not to come any more.

Lauren's "breaks" from piano lessons usually only lasted a short while:

Usually after a few months, I would tell my mother that I wanted to take piano lessons again. Mother would arrange for the teacher to come again. My mother never had to ask me to practice. I always did it voluntarily. She never forced me.... My point is, I felt that my mother supported me by not forcing and pushing me into taking piano. You see, people think that you need to pressure kids to help them learn. But I think if a child is really interested in an activity, it might be a beneficial to give children some time to think about what they want when they feel like quitting. If parents and teachers keep pushing, then it is possible that they will foster negative feelings in a child. Learning piano should be enjoyable. Pushing too hard only results in negative feelings towards the piano.

Lauren believes that it was because her mother gave her freedom and allowed her to make decisions that she persisted through the long years of piano study.

School experiences in Taiwan, as Lauren recalled, were music-related. From Grade 1 on, Lauren's classroom teachers asked Lauren to accompany whenever needed because they knew she played piano. Music seemed to be Lauren's way of getting people's attention in school:

I was not good at other things. I didn't have anything that helped me stand out from other people. I was not smart. I was not very good in math. I wasn't good at memorization. The only talent I had was perfect pitch. And I had a good musical sense.

At the end of Grade 3, the school distributed a notice outlining the different music ensemble opportunities such as choir, Chinese ensemble, and rhythm band (percussion instruments and mouth organs). Students who were interested in participating signed up for the ensembles and were grouped into a class by the school. Lauren joined the Chinese Ensemble Class in Grade 4. Besides regular academic subjects, students in special music classes took group instrumental lessons in the morning, during lunch breaks, or after school, as extracurricular activities. Children spent their Grade 4 year as the training period to learn new instruments and they started participating in the ensembles in Grade 5 and 6. The music ensemble classes are the ones that represented the school for external competitions. Lauren's brother was part of the Chinese ensemble; he played *er-hu* (Chinese fiddle). The *er-hu* teacher was also the director of the Chinese ensemble; he was the one who went to Lauren's mother and recruited Lauren. Considering that *er-hu* is an instrument which can be performed both solo and in an ensemble, Lauren and her mother picked *er-hu* as her instrument in the Chinese ensemble class.

Besides participating in daily *er-hu* and Chinese ensemble rehearsals, Lauren did not remember much about her school life in Taiwan. However, she thought that education in

Taiwan was based on memorization: “I didn’t understand why I studied all those courses back then.... If we memorized the course materials, we got good marks. If we didn’t, we received a bad report card. The teachers were only happy about high marks. I didn’t think they cared too much about why they were teaching those subjects.” After graduating from elementary school, Lauren went to junior high school for six months at which time her family’s immigration application was approved. She withdrew from junior high school and went to study English in a “cram” school for the rest of the school year.

In the summer of 1992, Lauren and her family moved to Canada; she was 12 years old. Lauren’s was uncertain about the reasons her parents decided to immigrate but she guessed that it was because her parents wanted to provide their children with a better educational and living environment: “Taiwanese people think that Western education is better. Besides, immigration was popular at the time.” After arriving in Canada, the family settled down in Vancouver, British Columbia. Lauren first enrolled in Grade 8 in Point Grey Secondary School then switched to Hamber in Grade 10 and stayed there for rest of her high school years. Lauren’s memory of her high school life was also music-related. She participated in both school band and choir: “I often got As in music courses; I also got awards in music. So far I only made one honor roll — in Grade 12. You see, I was not a diligent student. My parents did not care about me having good grades. Music was the only thing that made me shine in school.” School life in Canada was relaxed for Lauren. The teachers here were not as strict. Nevertheless, she noticed that she had become more outgoing and independent than she had been in Taiwan: “I became more talkative. The school provides training for students to make presentations in front of other people. That helped my [independent thinking]”.

As mentioned before, Lauren had several “breaks” during her long journey of piano study. One of the breaks had happened just before Lauren moved to Canada when she was in Grade 7. The academic workload had increased substantially as she experienced the pressure of the National High School Entrance Examination. As a result, she no longer had time to practice. It was not until after she came to Vancouver that she started taking piano again: “Most of my friends were taking lessons. School here was relaxed. So I told my mother that I wanted to take piano again.” Since then, Lauren has continuously taken piano lessons.

Lauren did not intend to be a music teacher when she started her studies at UBC. She first enrolled in the Faculty of Arts studying business: “I didn’t want to be a musician. My parents did not make the decision for me. I had always envied those business women who looked professional and confident so I thought maybe I could be a business woman.” Things did not progress as Lauren expected: “Once I started to take economic courses, I realized that I didn’t like business at all. I didn’t understand what those graphs meant. It was just not my field.” Therefore, towards the end of her first year in UBC, Lauren started to consider switching to another field. One of Lauren’s friends was in the UBC School of Music. She informed Lauren that instead of obtaining a Bachelor of Music from the School of Music, she could major in music while enrolled in the Faculty of Arts (obtaining a Bachelor of Arts). The difference between a student in the School of Music and a student in the Faculty of Arts majoring in music was that the former received private instrumental lessons and the latter did not: “One of my friends was in the third year. She was an arts student majoring in music, and she taught private piano part time. I thought that maybe it’s something I could find a job with.... I’d thought about taking Japanese, but it would be hard for me to find a job.” When Lauren made the decision to

switch to music, she was already too late for the audition. As a result, instead of being a student in the School of Music, Lauren maintained her status as an arts student taking music courses. Since no private instrumental lessons were offered by the university, Lauren studied piano privately. Currently, Lauren is still taking lessons from a UBC professor, even though she had graduated from university and has been a teacher herself for 4 years.

Upon graduating from UBC, Lauren became a private piano teacher: “I like it...I didn’t have anything else that I am really good at. Music is the only thing that I am [comfortable] with. Moreover, I can manage my own time with this job. It’s relaxing.” In the very beginning, Lauren’s mother helped Lauren find students. She would tell her friends about Lauren being a piano teacher. Once Lauren started getting students, her students spread the word. Lauren had more than 20 students at the time of interviews.

Wanting to be closer to her family, Lauren moved back to Taiwan in the spring of 2008. She taught music in private colleges for a year. Finding that she prefers living in Canada, Lauren moved back to Vancouver, British Columbia in 2009. She has resumed her private music teaching since then.

### **Mrs. Choi**

After Lauren told me that Mrs. Choi had agreed to participate in my study, I phoned her and set a time for the interview. It was convenient for her to be interviewed while her two children were taking their piano lessons. With Lauren’s permission, we decided to have our conversation at Lauren’s home. I was already waiting in Lauren’s living room when Mrs. Choi arrived. Mrs. Choi was in her early forties; she was a cheerful person with a small figure. Pleasantly energetic was my impression of her.

Once Mrs. Choi sat down, she began to talk about her son's French language learning. She talked to me as if we were long-time friends; we chatted freely. While it was interesting to listen to her beliefs and values, I had specific questions to ask as there were certain things that I needed to know from her. So, I gradually steered her to my interview questions. Here is Mrs. Choi's story.

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Mrs. Choi is from Taipei, Taiwan. After graduating from university, she worked in a trading company. Her husband holds a master degree in computer science from a university in the United States. He worked in a computer-related field in Taiwan. Life in Taiwan was comfortable for the family. Both Mr. and Mrs. Choi had high paying jobs. Mrs. Choi especially enjoyed her life in Taiwan: "My mother-in-law looked after my children during the week, so I was like a single lady during the week. I would go shopping every day after work. I was really happy there."

It was Mr. Choi's idea to immigrate. He had studied in the United States and felt that the environment in North America was better. After their first child was born, the couple began the application process for immigration. When the application went through, the couple struggled with whether they should give up their jobs in Taiwan and leave everything behind or maintain their current lifestyle and forget about the Canadian dream. Finally, Mr. Choi's boss in Taiwan suggested that they should avail themselves of the opportunity to obtain another citizenship. Listening to their friend's advice, the Choi family made their first trip to Vancouver, BC, Canada in 1997.

Mr. and Mrs. Choi had never been to Canada before. The purpose of this first trip was to fulfill landing procedures as well as to explore a new city. As the trip only lasted a few days, they stayed in a hotel in downtown Vancouver: "We strolled around the



downtown area every day. We thought that people here were friendly. They would say hello to you and they were nice to their children. I felt that the people here were open minded.... We stayed here only for a few days so I could afford to live in a luxury hotel. I was not aware of how expensive it was to live in this country though.” Having formed a positive impression of Vancouver, Mr. and Mrs. Choi flew home and quit their jobs. When they returned to Vancouver for the second time, they arrived both jobless. Moreover, Mrs. Choi was pregnant with their second baby.

Everything in Canada was new to the Choi family: “We were waiting for the baby to come and we did not have any income for an entire year. The first few months were like a vacation for us. We were curious about all the new things. Every time we heard about a place to see, we just hopped into our car and drove there. We were relaxed.” As it was easy for Mr. Choi to find a job in Taiwan, at first they did not worry about getting a job: “We thought that he should be able to find a job within three months, with his experience. Three months passed, and we heard no news; we started worrying.” It was not until a year later that Mr. Choi found his job at Vancouver Community College as a computer technician. Right now the family lives in a quiet neighborhood in the east side of Vancouver with their two children and Mr. Choi’s mother.

While Mr. Choi is the one who earns the money, Mrs. Choi has become a full time housewife since immigrating. Like most Taiwanese housewives, she has been actively involved in her children’s education. Mrs. Choi, however, claims that her husband has also been involved in their children’s education but to a lesser degree: “We always discuss our children’s education together; he is just not into details. We make general decisions together then I work out the details.” As both Mrs. Choi’s children started their schooling education in Canada, she did not talk much about the education in Taiwan

except for her own experience: “I think the teachers in Taiwan were authoritarians. You were not allowed to express your own opinions. You did what you were told.” In Canada, Mrs. Choi has been a volunteer in her children’s elementary school. Volunteering provides her with opportunities to understand more about elementary education in Canada. Using as an example how the children line up in front of the school building every morning to file into school, Mrs. Choi thinks that education in Canada teaches children how to respect themselves and society. She also benefits from observing while in the school:

Unlike my teachers back in Taiwan, the teachers here do not yell at children. For example, when the children sit on the carpet in the front of the classroom for story time, they are usually noisy. The teacher asks them to respect her time to talk. And the children are quiet all of sudden. I think this is something we need to learn as Taiwanese parents. I notice that I yell at my kids a lot. It’s like I am using my loud voice to make them listen. This is a habit that I need to change.

Interestingly, in addition to the regular school curriculum, Mrs. Choi is keen on developing her children’s language skills. Besides English, her two children are currently taking Chinese on Saturday and French lessons privately: “Recently I realized that if my children are not literate in French in high school, they will be viewed as different by their classmates.” Mrs. Choi is worried that her children will not fit in with other students if they cannot understand French. She also thinks that speaking French will provide her children with better job opportunities in Canada. Since Mrs. Choi herself does not know French, she does what she can to help her children: “We only speak Mandarin at home so I know I need to find other ways of helping. In addition to French lessons, I borrow French books, CD, and videos from the library so my children can master the language by reading, listening, and watching.” Mrs. Choi also talks about the pressures that her children face:

Although the school here does not push children, we parents certainly are trying to push our children to learn as much as possible.... You just don’t want your children to fall behind. I know that I might have pushed them too much. I am in total control

of their life.... but I am just afraid that they will fall behind.

Music, for example, is another subject that will prevent her children from falling behind.

Music is a necessity in Mrs. Choi's life. When she does the daily house chores, she listens to music: "I like music a lot. But I was from a poor family which could not afford instrumental lessons." Instead of learning an instrument, Mrs. Choi joined the school choir as a soprano. Her favorite music was Taiwanese folk songs. "When I am home by myself, I play Taiwanese folk songs at full volume. It is the music from home. It is the music that reminds me of my parents." As Mrs. Choi recalls, her interest in music was influenced by her father: "Although we were poor, my father spent his savings on a Japanese record player. Such a machine was rare at the time. He must have liked music a lot to do that." This interest in music was passed on from father to daughter. The daughter is now introducing this enjoyment of music to her two children.

Mrs. Choi has a boy and a girl; they are Leo and Lena, ages 10 and 8 respectively.

Both children have been taking private piano lessons since they were around 5 years old.

Mrs. Choi believes that "piano provides a foundation for learning all instruments.

Children can easily learn other instruments if they know piano first." She also thinks that sending her children to piano lessons is a way of fulfilling her own childhood dream:

I think I am trying to make up for what I didn't get in my childhood. My parents couldn't afford to give me piano lessons back then. As a result, I can sing well but I can't play an instrument. This is the biggest regret of my life.... I just don't want my children to have the same regret when they grow up. That's why I send them to lessons. At least I am giving them an opportunity to learn.

The first piano teacher Mrs. Choi found was a high school student: "He had passed Grade 10 in piano. He lived close to my house. I knew him from friends. And he was inexpensive. I thought he could be a role model for my son since he was young. But I was wrong." Apparently, this first teacher was inexperienced at teaching and he was trying to impose what he learned from his own teacher on Leo:

Leo had two terrible years with that teacher. The teacher was strict and had high expectations because that's how his teacher treated him. But everyone has a different learning speed and this teacher didn't know that.... Leo cried every time we sat down to play piano. And the teacher complained a lot because he thought my son did not work hard enough. And soon I felt that I could not take those complaints any more.

Aware of her son's unhappiness about learning piano, Mrs. Choi went to Leo's kindergarten to talk to his school teacher. The school teacher suggested that if Leo was not happy, maybe they should consider stopping lessons for a while; there was no need to start music lessons that early. Mrs. Choi then talked to her husband about Leo's piano education: "I asked my husband what we should do now. I didn't want to stop the lessons just because of one teacher's complaints. I didn't want to stop nourishing our son's interest in the piano. What can we do now?" Mr. Choi immediately decided that it was time to switch to another teacher. After getting referrals from friends, they found Lauren. Right now both Leo and his sister have been taking lessons from Lauren for more than two years.

Mrs. Choi sees herself as a parent with high expectations. She wishes to guide her children into different areas of learning such as languages, art, and music in order to eventually help them develop a lifetime interest or a career skill. Nevertheless, the children are still young and Mrs. Choi has a long journey ahead. Her current wish for her children is for them to be healthy and live happily. This is her simplest expectation, she says.

### **Leo**

Leo was running around with a bag of potato chips in his hands when it was his turn for the interview. I had finished speaking with his mother while Leo finished his piano lesson. Mrs. Choi called Leo over, and he obediently followed his mother's request. After Mrs. Choi left the living room, Leo and I began our conversation. I was a little bit

worried when I start the conversation because Leo looked so young. I was not sure he would understand all my questions. After the first five minutes, I knew I had been needlessly worried. Despite his naïve appearance and the delicate voice, Leo communicated and behaved like an adult. Although Leo understood most of my questions, he gave only short answers. Probing questions did not yield much more information. Sometimes Leo would just give me an “I don’t know” answer.

Leo is a Grade 3 student from Weird Elementary School. He lives with his parents, grandmother, and a younger sister in the east part of Vancouver. He was born in Taiwan and moved to Vancouver when he was almost 2-years old. He plays piano and does homework in his free time; his favorite activities are reading and playing on the computer. Leo goes to the public library every week and, each time, he borrows 10 books. Among all the books he had read, his favorite is the Geronimo Stilton series which are funny adventure stories of a mouse. Leo wants to be a cook when he grows up because he likes cooking.

Leo started taking piano lessons when he was 5. He has been playing piano for 4 years now. He is happy about taking the Grade 3 examination in the coming examination season. Leo could not explain why he started piano lessons; he was only obeying when he first began. His favorite piano music is the kind that “doesn’t sound bad.” When I asked Leo what kind of piano teacher he likes, he pointed to Lauren. “I like her because she is not mean.... and she is happy.”

According to Leo, his practice time each day is around one hour. The first thing he does when he practices is to set the timer. Then he plays his songs. He practices piano because “[he] can get better at it and [he] go next level.” Moreover, he enjoys the practices.

Leo likes taking music lessons. Music lessons make him happy. Lastly, he was proud of participating in this study because he likes music.

### **Music Lessons**

It was a fine Sunday afternoon in spring. A refreshing breeze cooled the air under an azure blue sky. Colorful tulips and other spring flowers dotted the landscape. It was one of those days that I would have preferred to pass strolling in Stanley Park or sipping a latte in a side café on Granville Island. Working was the last thing on my mind. However, other people work on Sunday, and Lauren is one of them.

When I arrived at her door around 2 p.m., Lauren was taking a short break in the living room: “I started teaching at 11:30 a.m. this morning and just had my lunch,” she explained. As we greeted each other and conversed casually, Lauren opened a door next to the kitchen. Behind the door there was a stairway leading to Lauren’s studio in the basement. We walked down together.

The basement was quite dark. We walked towards the only room where lighting emerged. The fluorescent lighting quickly vanquished my uneasiness in the darkness as I stepped into the large, rectangular room. A Yamaha grand piano occupies one side of the room. A chair, evidently for the teacher, is conveniently placed on the right of the piano bench. A floor lamp behind the Lauren’s chair casts light on the music stand on the piano. Pencils and pen lie scattered on the music stand and on the ledges of the piano. A metronome is placed on the top of the piano within Lauren’s reach. Another chair, presumably for parents who wish to observe their children, is placed further away on the left side of the piano bench. Young children can place their feet on a short stool stored under the piano bench when they play. A desk sits against the wall besides the parent’s chair. Children sometimes write on it when doing theory questions. There are several

phone books stacked on the top of the desk. According to Lauren, these phone books serve as sitting pads to extend the height of the chair: “My students sit on the phone books when they are too short to view the music.” Lauren also has a white board on which she writes key words when teaching music history to students. In addition, there is a photocopy machine placed just outside the studio so Lauren can make study copies of music for students.

The teaching space occupies only one third of this large room. The rest of it serves as a family room consisting of a sitting area with three couches arranged in an open rectangle with a coffee table in the middle. A complete audio and video system along with a big screen TV is located at the far end of the room. It is here that Lauren’s family sings Karaoke. Lauren connects the family room to her teaching: “I have got the whole sound system here, so I can play CDs for my students.” One side of the wall is covered with wooden shelves painted white, making ample shelving for books. The shelving space is divided into two sections separated by a structural column. The section in the teaching area contains music-related books such as teaching materials, music history, and music theory books. Students’ paintings, thank you cards, and short paragraphs are displayed on the shelf. The other section of the library, situated in the entertainment area just behind a couch, includes fictional books such as comic books and novels. A shorter cabinet is located in front of the column between the book cases. CDs of various musical styles and eras occupy this smaller shelf. The spacious teaching area provides a bright clean space for learning.

My plan for the day was to set up the recording equipment, go upstairs to interview Leo’s mother while her son was having his lesson and talk to Leo after his lesson. While Lauren prepared for the lesson I set up my video equipment. Alone in the room, I recalled

Lauren's values and experiences of private music teaching described in her earlier interview.

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Lauren has been a studio music teacher since her sophomore year at UBC. She teaches piano, music theory, and music history at her home studio in Vancouver, BC. Most of her students are at the beginner and intermediate levels (preliminary to Grade 7 RCM). Lauren teaches six days per week, from Tuesday to Sunday: "I used to have two days off.... I used to put as many students as possible on the same day but not any more. It became too stressful. So now I spread them out and take only one day off instead." Lauren's students come for lessons once a week. More mature or advanced students have one-hour lessons whereas younger or novice students start with half-hour lessons. Like most private music teachers, Lauren gives herself breaks from teaching now and then: "If I am traveling somewhere, then I take a break. I am here this July and August. I went away last June." As Lauren explains, many students stop coming to the lessons during their school winter and summer vacations. Some parents want lessons for their children during the breaks while others tend to give their children a "relaxation" period when school is out. Lauren still provides lessons when she is in Vancouver. Although Lauren did not say so explicitly, I concluded that she plans her working schedule around the children's school schedules.

Lauren's lessons involve annual piano recitals. The recital is usually held in May and takes place at a church near her house. The purpose of the recital, as Lauren indicates, is to provide a chance for students to share what they have learned over the year; it is a way for students to gain on-stage experience. It is also an opportunity for parents to see the results of their investment. Finally, the recital provides evidence of the success of



Lauren's teaching: "I think of recitals as a way of showing my accomplishments in teaching. [The students' playing] shows that I have accomplished my teaching goals. Recitals are an activity that [benefit] everyone involved."

Lauren plays several roles in the recital. First, she is the organizer. She sets the date, rents the venue, hands out notice for students' parents, arranges the reception, and prints programs notes: "I used to make the program notes myself. This year, one of my students volunteered to create the program notes for me. It's interesting that he wants to be involved in the process of organizing a recital this way." Secondly, Lauren is a coach who prepares and guides students through the entire process of participating in a recital: students first learn about the recital; they practice for the performance; and they train psychologically to conquer the fear of performing on stage. Thirdly, Lauren is a performer herself. She is the master of the ceremony who makes announcements and keeps the program flowing during the recital. At its conclusion, Lauren also plays one selection for the audience: "I think it is my responsibility to perform. I ask my students to perform. It is only fair that I perform for them as a role model. I think my students' parents expect me to do that. There is pressure on me to play." Lastly, Lauren brings people together. Parents and students get to talk to each other and share their experiences. "[People] come to my house afterwards [to have food and chat]." In another words, Lauren is a social mediator/leader who brings students and parents together.

Besides playing in the recitals, most of Lauren's students take RCM examinations. They begin taking examinations once they have reached Grade 3 piano. As a teacher, Lauren thinks the best time for students to start taking piano lessons is at age 5: "It really depends if the children are able to communicate with me and sit still.... I feel the best time to start developing children's musical skills is between age 5 and Grade 3." If

children start taking lessons at age 5, they will be in Grade 3 and beyond in school by the time they reach Grade 3 in the RCM system. They will already have had some performance experiences from the recitals and will be mature enough to face the pressure of examinations and performance anxiety.

Given her interest in RCM examinations, it is not surprising that Lauren uses the RCM curriculum as her main source of teaching materials. She thinks highly of the RCM system: “My overall satisfaction is high [with the RCM system]. No system is perfect though.... The technical level of music that they select for each grade can be confusing sometimes.” As Lauren further explains, she finds that sometimes a piece with a Grade 3 difficulty level is put in the Grade 5 repertoire book: “The arrangement [might be easier than other pieces in the book]. It’s only my personal opinion. I am sure that the editors who select these pieces have their reasons [for putting them where they do].”

Nevertheless, Lauren also supplements RCM materials with movie music, piano arrangements of Taiwanese popular music, and light piano music: “Children like [melodies] that are sentimental [and easy to follow]. So I buy popular music such as movie music and Taiwanese pop music and [make copies] for my students.” Making music copies is, however, an illegal practice. Although we are all aware of the copyright law, it is common for private music teachers to lend their music (either audio music or printed music) to students for study copies as a courtesy. None of my participants used photocopied music in the lessons I observed. However, when Lauren mentioned her copy machine outside of her studio “so students can make copies when they want to,” she caught my attention.

According to the Canadian Copyright Act (Department of Justice Canada, 2009), one is allowed to make copies of music for private use under these conditions: “1. one is

not selling, renting, or exposing for sale or rental. 2. one is not distributing, whether or not for the purpose of the trade. 3. one is not communicating to the public by telecommunication. 4. one is not performing or causing to be performed in public.”

Therefore, it is considered illegal for a student to bring photocopied music to perform in a recital. To remind teachers who are not familiar with a copyright law, the Royal Conservatory of Music specifically addresses this matter in the piano syllabus under their copyright and photocopying section: “photocopied music will not be permitted in the examination room. Candidates who bring unauthorized photocopies to the examination will not be examined” (Royal Conservatory of Music, 2008, p. 129).

As music educators, it is our job to teach students to respect the creativity of others. While school music educators need to pay attention to a copyright because they often use music in public settings, the use of copied music in private music lessons seems to be ignored. Teachers, students, and parents must be aware of this matter in order to avoid breaking the law.

As mentioned before, Lauren sends students to RCM examination only when they reach a certain level in their piano playing. She does not start beginners with the RCM curriculum. She uses piano method books by editors such as the *Leila Fletcher Piano Course* (Fletcher, 2008), *Alfred's Basic Piano Library* (Palmer, Manus, and Lethco, 1999), and *The Bastien Piano Library* (Bastien, 1981) for young learners:

I do not have set material for children. I choose the materials according to my students' needs. I select the material based on students' playing level and personality. Some books are more colorful than others. [Younger children are motivated to study piano when they have colorful books.]

Music theory, sight-reading, and ear training are significant parts of Lauren's curriculum. In the RCM system, it is mandatory for children to take theory examinations once they reach the Grade 5 performance level. Although Lauren teaches music

rudiments specifically for the purpose of the examination, she believes music theory enhances students' playing: "When students understand [the relationship of] major and minor and the [structure] of a scale their playing is made easier.... Music theory helps students' playing technique."

I have been curious about current private music teachers' views about ear training and sight-reading because the latter were neglected by private music teachers in Taiwan when we were taking lessons. Lauren agrees: "I think the examination system was not really well established in Taiwan [at that time]...they didn't care about [sight-reading and ear training] if it was not on the examination." I asked Lauren if she would still include sight-reading and ear training in her lessons if they were not required by RCM. She responded: "I would. Listening is so important. But I would look for [longer] pieces for my students to sight-reading.... RCM excerpts are too short."

Lauren sees herself more as a music teacher than a musician: "I am not a very good performer, I am okay at teaching though." In the Taiwanese culture, we see teachers as authority figures. Although students are not necessarily afraid of teachers, respect and obedience are two societal norms that students are expected to observe (Brand, 2002).

Lauren, interestingly, views her relationship with students differently:

I am more like a friend to my older students from Grade 4 and beyond. There is not much distance between my students and me. They see me more like an older sister. They are close to me.... They are not afraid of me. They are not tense when they are with me.... For the younger ones, I just do the teaching. But I chat with my older students. We exchange jokes. My students tell me what happens in their school lives. We chat about hair and make up. We also discuss whether a tutor is good or not.

The above words are strongly connected with Lauren's teaching philosophy. The purpose of music education, according to Lauren, is to nurture an interest that cultivates a child's moral character as well as fosters a desirable temperament. The key reasons for a child to study piano are enjoyment and liking music:

Liking music does not equal liking to practice.... Many children do not like to practice. But they enjoy playing [piano] and going to lessons. I always tell their parents not to push their children.... [My job] is to keep them interested in [learning music].... Maybe when they become older, they will concentrate more.... If a child tells me that he or she no longer enjoys listening to and playing music, then I ask the parent to stop bringing the child to lessons.

Since Lauren's purpose as a teacher is to keep children interested in learning music, it is clear why she likes her students to feel close to her and see her as a friend. We all enjoy playing music with a friend. Having a lesson and playing for a teacher is sometimes pressure-laden. Pressure can result in a negative attitude towards learning. After all, the personal warmth of a teacher is also an important influence on children's learning motivation, especially for beginning instrumentalists (Davidson et al., 1998).

Lauren's views remind me of who I was when I first started teaching. It might be that I did not want my students to repeat the pressured musical learning experience I had lived. I was a girl who wanted to make lessons fun. I did not want any distance between my students and me. Since I started student teaching at age 14, all my students at that time called me "elder sister Kim." I remember feeling very uncomfortable when parents called me "teacher Kim." Why this discomfort? Was it because I was too young and inexperienced to see myself as a teacher? Back then, teaching was not a career for me; it was a way of earning an allowance. I was still searching for my place in life and looking for direction. And like Lauren, I had trouble managing my students during the lessons. Although most of my Taiwanese Canadian students are obedient, I did have Caucasian students who ran around the studio while I tried to get them back on the seat. In fact, the "personal warmth" which I tried to portray became an obstacle in my classroom management skill. As a result, some students stopped coming to me because their parents thought that I was too much like a sister instead of a teacher. Once I graduated from university, my students called me "auntie Kim." Maybe I was old enough to be called

“aunty.” Although “aunty” and “sister” both mean I want to make students feel at home while they are learning, “aunty” was a step closer to portraying an authority figure. I was more aware of my professional role. Nevertheless, I saw myself more as a musician than a teacher at the time.

Since I have entered a Ph.D. program, my students have started to call me “teacher Kim.” My age matches the image of a “teacher,” and I am no longer uncomfortable when people call me “teacher.” I even introduce myself as “teacher Kim” to younger children; I see myself as a teacher now. I still chat with my students, but music lessons to me are no longer just about being fun and enjoyable. I care more about how students learn and what they have learned. Whereas I used to care if my students liked me or not as a person, now I worry about whether they can feel the music they are playing. I have become an authoritative figure after all. I wonder if Lauren will go through similar changes after she has been teaching for many years.

From Lauren’s descriptions of her past private music teachers, I might further assume that her desire to be a friend to her students might be an outcome of her own experiences: “I learned something from each of my teachers. I can’t point to one as having a more significant impact. But I have liked my teachers in Canada better. They are nice in general.” However, I did not sense a strong master-apprenticeship bonding between Lauren and her teachers because she talked only slightly about their interactions. What brought Lauren and her teachers together, it seems, is the musical knowledge and the technique transmitted to Lauren from her teachers. Lauren agrees that the way she teaches is somewhat influenced by the way she was taught: “Yes, I teach the way I was taught a little bit. I have kept the technique and the practice strategies [and taught them to my students.] The way I organize the lesson time is similar. And also the things we

emphasize [are similar].... I emphasize [bringing out students'] musicality more....

Because my teachers taught musical expression to me, I think it's important for me to teach that to my students." While sticking to the traditions that her teachers passed on to her, Lauren has also tries to develop new ways to help her students learn effectively:

I think about new ways to teach all the time, [especially when I encounter a problem that I try to solve for students]. For example, some students could not get the intervals when doing ear training. I was surprised when I first realized that. I have perfect pitch. Ear training has never been difficult for me. I was inexperienced when I first started teaching, so I asked students how their former teachers taught them intervals. Those teachers used popular tunes for students to remember the intervals...like the beginning of [O Canada is a minor third] and so on. I have used this method since then. I also tell students to listen to the bottom note [and count up].... I try to think of new ways when I don't know how to teach.

In summary, similar to Ward (2004)'s findings, teaching as she was taught, learning from other's experience, and generating new methods when encountering problems are Lauren's ways of generating ideas for teaching.

There are ups and downs in all professions. In the journey of teaching, teachers face difficulties all the time. One of Lauren's problems is managing her students:

Students who are hard to control are most difficult.... I have students who run around the studio instead of sitting down to play. There are some students who have no interest in learning but are forced to be there by their parents. There are students who do not practice at home, and their parents do not care. There are those who talk all the time instead of playing.... Some children cry when I try to talk to them about good behavior or the need to practice.... It is only after I fully understand their personality and [find ways to deal with them accordingly] that [these behaviors] decrease.

In addition to the difficulties she faces, Lauren feels least successful as a teacher when her students have a hard time learning: "I get discouraged after teaching a student for a long time and he/she still doesn't get [what I want them to learn]." In other words, Lauren gets frustrated when her students do not achieve the learning goal. Despite the frustrations, there are happy moments in her teaching:

Seeing my students' progress is my greatest success. I sometimes [compare] when a student first came to me with how they are now. I feel happy after the comparison. When a student first comes to me, he cannot read music. I have to teach him by

pointing note to note. Now he can read...and is counting.... I always have a sore throat [because I have to count out loud]. Now that he can read and count on his own, I am joyful.

It is these successful moments that keep Lauren going as a piano teacher. Furthermore, patience, endurance, and experience are qualities that Lauren has developed as a private music teacher: “The experience I have gained from teaching helps me teach.... I used to lose my temper easily in the beginning. I thought ‘This is so easy. Why can’t you get it?’ Then I learned that [learning takes time]. I gradually learned to be patient and more tolerant.”

As mentioned earlier, Lauren went back to school after a few years of teaching and obtained a Master of Music Education. In an e-mail exchange, Lauren told me more about her university experiences:

I found it an interesting experience overall. I learned a great deal about different aspects of music education, such as the philosophy, psychology, sociology, and history of music education. Before I started the program, I had no idea about any of these topics. After taking courses, I became more familiar with music education, particularly in the States and Canada. I also benefited from courses informing me about arts-based research. It really broadened my horizon. I used to think research was [about] gathering data from books and articles. Ever since taking these courses, I believe that [studying] people’s experiences and beliefs is truly valuable. You may have the same stories as someone in the same or different communities around the world.

Not only Lauren’s understanding of “research” has changed, she also reads professional books since she started the master’s program. I asked her about the impact of her master’s degree on her pedagogy. She replied: “Well...it has helped my teaching in some ways. The part that has benefited me the most was doing the final project, because the topic that I chose was closely related to what I have been doing with my career.” Lauren’s final project was about strategies to enhance practicing. She compared her teacher friend’s experiences with her own teaching experiences. Some of the experiences she talked about in her paper are evident in her lessons.



Lauren occasionally attends workshops with friends. It seems that the sessions she attends do not help her much in teaching: “They are okay.... One time it was about how to select and maintain pianos...it was hosted by Steinway.... Sometimes it is about income tax...they teach you how to send in the tax form.” Upon hearing this, I was not surprised to find that Lauren is not a member of the music teacher association: she does not understand the music teacher association’s objectives: “I don’t know what benefit it will bring.... You have to pay a large fee don’t you?” It is true that private music teachers have to pay over a hundred dollars to maintain their membership, but the money is spent on hosting recitals, workshops, and music festivals. Part of the fee also pays for the insurance. All private music teachers in the association are insured against work-related accidents (e.g., car accidents while driving to a student’s house). After I briefly explained what the association does and where the fee goes, Lauren expressed an interest in knowing more about the association.

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Leo and his young sister Rose ran into the studio and disrupted my musings. They saw the camera and clustered around it. “What is this for?” Leo asked. “I am going to use this camera to record your lesson,” I answered. “Yeah! I am going to be on TV,” Leo said excitedly as he ran out of the room. Lauren walked in while Leo and I were chatting. After showing Lauren how to work the camera, I left the room to interview Leo’s mother upstairs. I saw Leo and told him that his piano lesson was about to start. He walked downstairs quickly, and his lesson began.

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Leo was preparing for his Grade 3 RCM examination during the four lessons I recorded. The first three lessons lasted 30 minutes. The fourth lesson took place about

two weeks before the examination; therefore Lauren increased the lesson to 45 minutes. All Leo's lessons were organized into three segments: repertoire, technique and studies, and ear training and sight-reading. Lauren organizes all her lessons in a similar way: "I have these three components [repertoire, technique, ear training and sight-reading] in all my lessons. They don't usually come in the same order because I am afraid that students will tire of the same pattern. [For those who study theory], I take the last five minutes of the lesson time to teach them and assign theory homework." As Leo is still too young to study theory, I did not see theory teaching in Leo's lessons. Lauren does not work from any written lesson plan. She "think[s] about what to teach when students first come for lessons" and plans students' lesson according to what she perceives to be the needs of her students and their parents: "I think about what to teach when they first come to study with me. I start by trying to understand their current level and [think about what to do next]. I might start this one with note reading while starting another with learning finger numbers." As Karlsson and Juslin (2008) described, instrumental teachers teach in an ad hoc manner and they rarely pre-plan their lessons. Instead of having an actual written plan, Lauren teaches according to her perception of changing circumstances and the general direction the student needs to take to progress, based on her experience.

Over the four lessons, I observed Leo's preparation for the examination. The first lesson focused on getting the correct notes and counting accurately. In the second lesson, Lauren and Leo worked on the dynamics. The third lesson was about shaping, phrasing, and memorization. The fourth lesson served as a mock examination and an opportunity for fine tuning. Teacher modeling behaviors, which Dickey (1992) identified, were evident in Lauren's lessons: first, she demonstrated technique, pitch, phrasing, shaping, dynamic, articulation, rhythm, and tone quality. She also imitated Leo's mistakes and

showed him solutions. Second, Lauren played with Leo to show tempo and dynamics. Third, singing, another form of teacher modeling (Rose & Buell, 1998), was widely used throughout Lauren's lessons. Lauren sang to show phrasing, shaping, dynamic, tempo, rhythm, intervals, and pitch. Finally, Lauren clapped or used a pencil to tap the steady beat on the piano.

When working on a piece, Leo usually played through the piece once before Lauren made any comments. Lauren marked his book and later worked on the details with Leo. She split the piece into different phrases and worked with each phrase individually. Lauren usually explained or demonstrated a point that she wanted Leo to fix. Then she would ask Leo to play the phrase in steps approximating the desired outcome until he improved. Lauren had unconsciously applied Vygotsky's (1934) scaffolding theory into her lessons. Repetition seems to be an important strategy in Lauren's lessons. One thing Lauren did not mention when she talked about her teaching materials is her use of music compact disks. All RCM piano series come with supplementary CDs. One can either purchase the CD with the books as a package or buy the CD separately. Lauren uses the CD to demonstrate playing style, dynamics, tempo, and tone color. She did not play the CD during the lessons I observed but she kept asking if Leo had listened to the CD and referring to the CD when she demonstrated for him.

Although Lauren had previously mentioned that she emphasized "musicality" in her lessons, I was surprised at the detailed musical ideas that Lauren tried to teach Leo. "Wrist turning," for instance, is a technique to produce a better tone quality. "Loud and soft" produces an accent. Lauren used proper musical terms such as "shaping" and "phrasing" all the time. It is not clear that young Leo understood what these words mean because he asked about them several times. Lauren had an interesting way of helping Leo

understand. Here is a conversation from the second observation:

Lauren: Okay! Let's try to shape the phrases.

Leo: What's shape the phrases?

Lauren: It means...when you talk, do you talk the same? If I say "how are you today" how would you say that? [Lauren tried to exaggerate the different tones in the sentence.]

Leo: How are you today? [whispering]

Lauren: No. [Say it] loud.

Leo: How are you today? [loudly]

Lauren: Yah! So there is a tone right? How are you today? [slowly] [Lauren uses hand postures to show the different tones in the sentence.]

Leo: How are you today? [high and soft pitch, singing like]

Lauren: Right! You don't go "how are you today" [plain tone] right?

Leo: Didn't do it. [mumbling]

Lauren: Yah! So this is shape.... I want you to shape the phrases.

Leo: Okay!

Lauren: When the scale goes up, you do a crescendo. So you go [Lauren plays an ascending scale from Leo's music] can you hear anything?

Leo: Yes! Music! Loud!

Lauren: No! What I was talking about? What do you do with that? [Lauren plays the scale again while pointing at the book.]

Leo: Medium and loud.

Lauren: Okay! Listen to every note. Are they the same or different? [Lauren plays the scale again while demonstrating the crescendo at the same time.]

Leo: Em! Go medium loud and then go loud!

Lauren: Yah! So that's what I call shape!

Leo probably still does not understand what "shape a phrase" means because this is not part of his everyday vocabulary. Yet he probably remembers that he has to play a crescendo every time he sees the ascending scale in the book with Lauren's marking. He might have a blurry idea about shaping. There is also a possibility that he might just be mimicking his teacher or obeying without thinking.

Another aspect I found motivating is Lauren's using of stories. For example, she told a story of two family members when teaching formula scale pattern to students in her masters' project:

Making up a story is a good way to teach a student how to play a formula pattern.... My students are always confused when each hand plays in contrary motion or in parallel motion. To explain this, I just tell them a story about going to the shopping mall. For instance, I say: "It's a parallel motion when you go to the mall with your parents on Sunday afternoon. But when you shop with your mom [and] your dad goes to the bookstore to read magazine, that's a contrary motion. After 30 minutes, you meet up with your dad (that's contrary again) in the centre of the mall. You show him what you've bought and happily go home together. And that's parallel.

The story was applied to Leo's lessons, and here is the result:

Leo: Is that the hint, you go up there? [Leo played contrary motion.]

Lauren: Yes.

Leo: And you go back down. [Leo played parallel motion.]

Lauren: Yes. And they say goodbye

Leo: Bye bye! [Leo played contrary motion]

Lauren: And they meet, and they go home together. [Leo played parallel motion.]

By telling a story, Lauren created a vivid image of a concept using examples from students' daily lives. While research has suggested that instrumental teachers should model more and reduce teacher talk (Dickey, 1991; Rostvall & West, 2003; Siebenaler, 1997), verbal modeling, such as the use of imagery and analogies, could enhance student learning (Woody, 2000; Woody, 2006). Nevertheless, according to Benson and Fung (2004) this strategy is less frequently used in private music lessons than teacher talk.

Lauren used different forms of reward in her lessons. Verbal encouragement accompanied most of Leo's playing. Lauren gave general encouragement such as "Good!" and "Excellent!" before she made comments. She prepared small bags of chips to treat students after lessons. Small rewards such as candies, pencils, and stickers all helped Lauren motivate children. No punishment was used: "I think it's my personality. I don't get mad or lose my temper [easily]. I don't like to force or discourage students.... [If the student does not behave,] I will just say I will tell your mom, as a warning."

I do not know what Lauren and Leo's mother told Leo about the videotaping. For some reason, Leo thought he had been selected to go on TV because he had been a good student. As he was only a Grade 3 child, he was not really able to concentrate on his piano playing because he was distracted by the camera throughout his four lessons. Leo's reactions to the camera usually happened during the first half of the lesson; his mind returned to the music for a while; then his attention shifted back to the camera. He ran

and greeted the camera by pressing his face against the camera at the beginning of the lessons. He ran to look at the camera at the end of the lesson. He winked or made faces at the camera between pieces. When Lauren stopped his playing and tried to talk to him about music, he made funny gestures. He also made nonsense noises and uttered silly words such as “Yew, someone farted! I am a macho man!” Lauren, on the other hand, tried very hard to keep Leo on his seat, ignored these behaviors, and kept teaching as though nothing had happened:

[Laughing] He is funny. But I can’t really laugh and encourage what he is doing... I have to ignore him because I don’t want to encourage [his behaviors].... I think he is acting out because of the camera. I have never seen this side of him before and I am surprised. He is a good child and does not normally [behave] like that.

Interestingly, although Leo did all these silly things in front of the camera, he cared about how people saw him as a piano player. Here are a few examples: First, when Lauren tried to tell him that he had an inconsistent tempo: “You slow down here, is it because...!? He yelled: “Stop it!” Lauren did not understand so she asked: “You slow down because you stopped?” Leo replied: “No stop telling people!” Secondly, Lauren wanted to teach Leo that we normally play a crescendo on an ascending scale. While Leo was playing the passage, Lauren reminded him and Leo yelled: “Okay! Okay! Stop saying it!” Finally, Leo encountered a problem when practicing the shaping of a phrase. Lauren tried to help out by singing and playing with him. Leo said: “Hey! Let me do it!” He did not want Lauren to help him because he wanted to prove that he could do it by himself. All these examples suggest that Leo did not want Lauren to criticize his piano playing in front of the camera nor did he want people to see weaknesses in his playing. Lauren, on the other hand, claimed that all these behaviors were atypical. She said that Leo was normally obedient when there was no camera.

Since Leo is more fluent in English, Lauren used English as the main language in his

lessons. Only words related to classroom management such as “sit down” “please listen” “please behave” were expressed in Mandarin: “I chat with him in Mandarin but teach in English. I am afraid he wouldn’t understand Mandarin well. [It is also easier] for me to teach musical terms to him in English.” Most of the instructions were verbal. As West and Rostvall (2003) predicted, Lauren did most of the talking while Leo answered most of the questions with short words like “yah!” and “okay!” He spoke longer, unrelated sentences when he was acting out for the camera though.

Because Leo was raised in the Canadian culture, he was not afraid to ask questions when he did not understand Lauren’s words. He pointed out the Italian terms in the book and asked what they meant. He also expressed his views when he did not agree with Lauren. For example, when Lauren wanted him to continue playing a piece on which he had already spent 15 minutes, he said “No! I don’t want to.” This kind of insubordination happens infrequently in the Taiwanese culture. Most children obey a teacher’s order instead of expressing what they want (Brand, 2002). Moreover, self evaluation existed in Leo’s learning. I noticed that Leo gave himself points after playing a song. For example, after playing the “Minuet in G” by J.S Bach, he stated “That’s 4 points [out of five]”. He also asked what Lauren thought about his playing: “How many points do I get?” Lauren usually answered him with a higher number than he gave himself. I later realized that it was Leo’s mother who started the point system at home. A goal point was set for a particular task. Whenever Leo collected sufficient points, he received a reward. Even though Lauren did not use the point system in her lessons, Leo continued to evaluate himself this way. Leo listened to his own playing very carefully. He sometimes criticized his own playing. This is what happened when working on counting a phrase:

Lauren: One, two, three, four. One two. No, Count! Okay! Try from bar 18.

Leo: [plays with Lauren counting.]

Lauren: Good! [referring to Leo's correct rhythm.]

Leo: No, that's not good. I played too soft and forgot some notes.

The above example shows that Leo has a clear knowledge of what and how he thought he should perform the phrase. He was aware of his mistakes. And he was not content with Lauren's "good" as a general encouragement. Taylor (1997) found that students are able to distinguish between general encouragement and specific positive comments. As Zhukov (2008) suggested, specific praise would be more helpful with children like Leo because it is important for students to know what they are getting comments about. There were times he talked to himself while he played. It turns out that he was commenting on the mistakes he had made. When Lauren identified that Leo missed playing an accent, Leo said: "Yah! That's why I said "Oh! Man!" I find this intriguing because I rarely see self evaluation in my students who are the same age as Leo.

In the four lessons that I recorded, Mrs. Choi (Leo's mother) did not come down to the studio once. She stayed upstairs and chatted with Lauren's mother and me. Lauren does not encourage or discourage parents from observing her lessons: "I might feel a little bit uneasy. But I don't mind if they sit in." Parents who have younger children or are first comers are the ones who sit in the lessons most often. Once the children are independent enough and a mutual trust is built, parents let their children take lessons by themselves. After each lesson, Lauren talks to the parents in person about their child's performance during the lesson: "I don't usually talk to them unless there is something that they need to know." Mrs. Choi also added that she talks to Lauren by phone when she wants to discuss serious matters without the child present. Lauren describes her relationship with students' parents as friendly. She has not yet encountered difficulties when communicating with students' parents.

As a teacher, Lauren has different expectations of her students and her students' parents. She hopes her students will continue to love playing the piano:



I hope [my students] can continue their piano playing and achieve a high level. For those who are talented...maybe they can go on to obtain [a degree in music]. I hope they continue to progress [in music learning] and always enjoy music.

I was interested in knowing if Lauren had voiced her expectations to her students so I

asked Leo what he thought his teacher expected of him. "To play everyday," Leo said.

Leo did not answer any of my questions in great depth. Nevertheless, Leo thought that his teacher wanted him to treat piano playing as part of his daily routine.

Lauren feels her students' parents expect her to be a good teacher who helps their children play better. Mrs. Choi further defined what a good teacher is like: "[A good music teacher] has to keep her students interested in coming to the lessons.... I only ask the teacher to make my child learn and keep him happy at the same time. I think that's enough." In return, Lauren expects her students' parents to be supportive while she assumes the role of a good teacher: "I need them to help me in things that I want to do with their children. Sometimes children refuse to go to recitals and examinations. Some parents give in. I hope they can encourage their children more." However, there seems to be a contradiction between Lauren's expectation of students' parents in general and the Mrs. Choi's expectation of a good teacher. While Lauren wants students' parents to help her by encouraging their children to participate in examinations and recitals (which would bring pressure), Mrs. Choi wants her child to be happy in music learning (which means a less pressured learning environment). When there are disagreements, Lauren usually explains her expectation to the students' parents before she conforms to students' parents' wishes: "I will express what I want. But if the students' parents insist on doing it their way, I would not compel them into doing what I want." Nevertheless, it is important for teachers and parents to know each other's expectations and work together. There are results that a teacher is better able to achieve with parental support. For example, a child

could care less about participating in a recital if his/her parents do not understand the importance of playing in the recital and encourage the child to participate. Cooperative efforts can result in more effective learning.

We now arrive at an important part of piano study — practicing. I always describe practicing as a way of self learning. Private music students usually spend at most one hour every week with their teachers; they spend most of their time learning, enjoying, improving, and solving problems by themselves. To accomplish this learning, correct practicing habits, motivation, parental support, and a strong desire to learn are needed. It is necessary to look into one's practicing experience in order to gain insight in the field of independent learning. However, because of his young age, Leo could only describe his experiences about practicing in simple terms.

Leo claims that he practices more than one hour everyday. According to Mrs. Choi, Leo played no more than 45 minutes per day. I don't know if Leo really felt he had practiced as long as he claimed or said so because he thought that was what his teacher expected: "My teacher expects me to play one hour every day." Leo's intrinsic motivation is not fully developed. Therefore, Mrs. Choi has to remind Leo to practice.

Leo likes playing happy music. For Leo, happy music means music that "does not sound bad." The example that Leo provided was "Clown" by D. Kabalevsky. This piece has a clear tonality, a strong beat, and vivid ricocheting rhythms that attract young children. Playing a piece like this one motivated Leo to practice. Leo knows that the purpose of practicing piano is to "get better at it and go to the next level." So far, he had learned to "play the dynamics, the sharps, and [the notes] correctly." He had trouble with accidentals and thought making mistakes was the hardest part of his lessons. As mentioned before, Leo judged himself quite often. He felt happy when he got things right

and upset when he made mistakes.

Mrs. Choi was the one who encouraged and motivated Leo at home. She was a full time participant in her son's first two years of piano learning. She sat with her son when he practiced. She sat in the lessons to take notes. She even took adult piano group class so she would know how to help her son. In addition, she made decisions on whether her son should take examinations:

“[Going to examination] is a mutual agreement between [Lauren] and me. This is the first time [Leo] will take an examination, after studying piano for four years. My [friends] suggest that I can let him try. It can be a goal for him. So I discussed this with Lauren. Lauren said he could try Grade 3. Doing so could increase his [self confidence].”

Besides sitting down with Leo to practice, Mrs. Choi sang with Leo when he played. “Leo likes to listen to my singing.... I just want him to feel that he is not alone when practicing. You see, sometimes it can be a burden for a child to sit and practice all by himself.” Now that Leo is older, Mrs. Choi no longer spends as much time with him when he practices. She spends more time with his younger sister now. Other than being a coach in the early stage of her children's piano lessons, Mrs. Choi also thinks she contributes to her children's lessons by driving them to lessons and through her financial support. Although Mrs. Choi is the one actively involved in Leo's private music lessons, Mr. Choi also supports his son: “He has a positive attitude towards the [whole private music lessons.] I discuss everything with him including buying piano and finding teachers.... We discuss the general directions together. Then I carry out the details.”

Mrs. Choi believes that Leo has learned to enjoy music through his piano lessons. Ever since Leo started taking piano, Mrs. Choi has gained much knowledge about piano herself. As she stated: “music is not just about playing. I hope he can enjoy it and let music foster and nourish his temperament.... Most important of all, I wish him the ability to savor [life through music].”

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Breaking away from the cultural norm, the relationship between Lauren and Leo, and Lauren and Mrs. Choi is based on friendship. Lauren saw herself as a friendly companion to her student and her students' parents rather than an authority. Furthermore, Leo and Mrs. Choi felt Lauren's personal warmth. Companionship was the key motivation for Leo to continue learning piano. A nurturing teacher, a caring mother, and a young beginner provide a second example of a teaching triad.

## Chapter Seven: A Knowledge Generator

*“I want all my students to have strong technical skills and a solid knowledge of theory.”*

### Sally

Sally’s mother answered the door when I arrived at her home. It was 10 a.m. and Sally had just been awakened by the door bell. Apologizing in her pajamas, Sally asked me to wait while she freshened up. I chatted with Sally’s mother while I waited.

I have known Sally for almost 10 years; she was part of a group with whom I partied when I attended UBC. At the time I had never thought of her as a musician or a music teacher. As a social acquaintance, she and I had never had a deep and meaningful conversation. Although I had lost touch with Sally after I went to graduate school, I sometimes heard about her from other friends; I learned that she had become a piano teacher after graduating from college. Coincidentally, I met Sally again in a coffee shop just when I was starting to look for participants for my research. Remembering that she was a private music teacher, I seized the opportunity to talk with her about my study. Sally immediately expressed an interest in my research. After she read my Letter of Invitation and consented to participate in the study, Sally and I set up an appointment for an interview.

I was almost running out of things to say to Sally’s mother when Sally finally appeared. Settling down in Sally’s family room, we began the interview.

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Sally lived with her parents and younger brother in Taipei, Taiwan before moving to Canada. Her father owns factories in Taiwan and China, producing handbags. Her mother is a housewife. As in many Taiwanese families, Sally’s mother was responsible for

educating their children while Sally's father supported the family financially. Music was an important part of her family's life. Both Sally's parents enjoyed listening to music as well as singing: "My father has a good ear and a good memory. He could sing a melody right after he heard it." While Sally's father enjoyed singing Karaoke, Sally's mother preferred singing and listening to art songs. Although neither parent had taken formal instrumental training, Sally's father played the harmonica, and her mother had taken a couple of Chinese zither lessons when she was younger. In addition, Sally's mother often played classical CDs or tapes when she was doing housework. Therefore, as a little girl, Sally was exposed to different kinds of music. Among all the music styles, Sally preferred classical instrumental music.

Sally showed an interest in music from an early age: "I liked to sing even when I was little. Mother said that I sang before I talked." Furthermore, the family created an environment that nourished Sally's musical interests. For example, when Sally was born, a piano had already been given to her as a gift:

I was the only girl among the 13 grandchildren on my father's side. Before I was born, my grandparents told my father and his brothers that they would give a piano as a birth gift when a daughter was born. As a result, I have had a piano since I was a baby.... Whenever I wanted to quit piano, my mother would ask me to keep going so I would not hurt my grandparents.

In order to use the gift properly, Sally started taking music lessons at age 4. She first went to the Yamaha music program taking group keyboard lessons and later on switched to private piano lessons.

Elementary school life in Taiwan was varied. Sally was actively involved in extra-curricular activities hosted by the school. She joined the school rhythm band; she participated in the girl scouts; she was also a frequent contestant in comic, art, and calligraphy contests. Besides taking piano lessons, she also took ballet and folk dance lessons. In contrast to her busy life in elementary school, Sally's experience in junior high

school was less active. Because she was studying for the National High School Entrance Examination, the only extracurricular activity in which she participated was singing and accompanying the choir. Due to the pressure of academic studies and the need to be competitive for admission to the more prestigious universities, Sally's piano lessons were discontinued for about a year. After graduating from junior high school, Sally was enrolled in a private senior high school for a semester before the family moved to Canada.

Sally had several private music teachers in her childhood. Among the piano teachers that Sally had in Taiwan, one teacher had the most impact:

That teacher was a voice major. She sang while I played. I liked singing myself so her actions helped increase my interest in music.... My mother told her that the purpose of my piano study was to keep me interested. So she never pushed me. The materials she gave me were fun to play and nice to listen to.

To this day, Sally sings while her students play. This practice could well be a direct influence of this teacher.

In 1992, Sally's family moved to Canada. The family settled in Richmond, BC, where most Chinese people have gathered. Sally immediately enrolled in Grade 11 in Steveston High School. Besides the regular academic courses, Sally took a choral music class. Although she was a singer in the ensemble, she occasionally substituted for the choir accompanist and performed in public as a choir accompanist.

Sally's first piano teacher in Canada was found through a newspaper advertisement: "The teacher was not a pianist. She was a percussion major and she was a novice teacher." After a few lessons, Sally did not feel that she was getting much from this teacher, so she switched to another one. The second teacher was a graduate of the Shanghai Academy of Music. It was from her that Sally heard about the Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM) examinations. Sally began her first piano examination in

Grade 12: “I started piano at the Grade 7 level. And I did not finish all the levels until college.” However, Sally did not have a good feeling when she took the examination:

I was almost sick of exams. I felt like I had lost something. It was no longer fun. I was literally “playing” piano in Taiwan. I got new music every now and then. I was always excited to learn new music. But here, I felt like I was playing for the examination.... I was having difficulty expressing the music. I could play the feeling when the teacher was singing besides me. I could not express well when I was alone. My teacher would get angry with me. And I was psychologically under high examination pressure.... Sometimes I sat there and stared at the music without knowing how to begin a piece.”

The negative feeling about examinations persisted until Sally went to college.

Sally did not pass the English requirements for university entrance; therefore, she went to college instead of university after her high school graduation. She first went to Kwantlan College and later on transferred to Langara College as a business major: “My parents had always wanted me to be a businesswoman. They want me to take over the family business, I guess. My father never mentioned his wish out loud. But my mom told me.” Even though Sally tried to be what her father wished, she was not successful in the business courses: “I failed accounting three times. My mom even tried to do my homework for me.” Struggling with the failing grades, Sally decided to end her misery by switching to a different field. She went to Vancouver Community College and started taking music courses.

There was almost a family revolt when Sally started taking music: “My dad was so mad that he wanted to disown me; he was angry at me for switching to music.” Sally later explained that her father was angry because he did not think she had worked hard enough to keep up in the business courses: “He thought I was being lazy.” Despite her father’s opposition, Sally continued her music study and got a diploma in piano: “I endured this difficult period. It was not until I started to make money as a piano teacher that my family started to believe that this is what I really wanted.”



The piano instructor from VCC helped Sally through the struggles with her family and assisted Sally in several ways:

I am grateful to her. She talked to me about my struggles.... It was because of her that I learned how to play different articulations and how to express dynamics. She also helped me with my posture. Some of my bad habits were changed because of her.... She was also the first one who showed me that music theory was not just a subject to study. It was embedded in music.

Sally thinks that this teacher from VCC had the most impact on her after she came to Canada.

After graduating from college, Sally became a piano teacher: “I wanted be a piano teacher because this is the only thing I am good at. I love children. And I think the life of a teacher is less complicated.” In the very beginning, Sally got her students by placing advertisements in the Chinese edition of *Buy and Sell*, a local newspaper. Her ad was in for three months, and there were satisfactory results. As students continued to take lessons from Sally, new students came by way of referrals. Currently, Sally has 35 students.

Unlike many private music teachers who teach in a home-based studio, Sally teaches at her students’ homes: “I put all the students from the same area in one day. So I have a Richmond Tuesday or a Vancouver Thursday.” Teaching at students’ house is time-consuming and energy-draining:

I had up to 44 students at one time and I finished teaching at 11 p.m. every day. I was tired and my father saw that. He asked if I wanted to operate from a fixed studio.... My concern was that was that I am not a famous teacher. It’s competitive in the world of studio teaching. There are many piano teachers in Richmond already. I thought I could have more students if I were willing to travel to their homes.

Sally has been teaching for five years now.

As a piano teacher, Sally believes that learning music helps build students’ persistence and helps release the pressures of everyday living. The purpose of taking music lessons, she said, is not only learning how to play an instrument but also enjoying

music. Recently, Sally has been feeling a little tired of teaching. She wants to re-create herself as a musician rather than be a music teacher. Right now she is in the process of establishing her own band while keeping piano teaching as her main income source — a safety net. Her plans for the future include performing in restaurants, at weddings, and at social functions. Sally got married in May, 2008.

### **Mrs. Hu**

Mrs. Hu is a short, stocky woman in her early forties. She welcomed us into her home. As Sally taught in the living room where the piano is located, Mrs. Hu and I stayed in the kitchen. Mrs. Hu is an outgoing person with a pleasant personality. Drawn in by her cheerful voice and vivid body language, I was soon immersed in her story.

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Born and raised in Taiwan, Mrs. Hu graduated from Hung Kuang Nursing College. She was a pediatric nurse for several years. After her third child was born, she quit her hospital job and became a housewife while maintaining a part-time job in a daycare centre. Her husband has a Master's degree from the United States and is currently working in an electronics-related field in Shanghai, China. Mr. and Mrs. Hu have four children: Jane (14), Jack (11), Tina (8), and Sam (7).

A tough decision faced the Hu couple when they considered whether or not they should move to another country. Because of his experience living in the United States, Mr. Hu thought that North America countries such as the United States and Canada would provide a far better environment for raising their children than Taiwan. Agreeing with her husband, Mrs. Hu left her home and comfortable life behind. The family came to Canada in 1999. Despite the fact that Mrs. Hu's two sisters lived in Toronto, the Hu family settled in Richmond BC because of the moderate weather. As Mr. Hu still works in Shanghai, it

is more convenient for him to visit if the family stays on the west coast: “We have four kids. It’s such a big expense. There is no way he could quit his job.” While Mr. Hu visits a couple of times a year, Mrs. Hu has been left alone in Canada to take care of their children.

Both children came to Canada when they were very young. Only Jane and Jack received any schooling in Taiwan. Jane completed Grade 3 before she came here. Jack spent only one year in the elementary school. Mrs. Hu was not much involved in her children’s school life in Taiwan because she was taking care of her third child while pregnant with the fourth:

Jane went to private school the first year. She was under a lot of pressure because all the other students in the school had a good family background. I did not know about this until later. I switched her to a public school the second year where she met a very good teacher who guided her slowly into learning. She was happier after that.... Jack’s teacher always complained. She always complained about Jack because he moved a lot and never paid attention in class.

Ever since moving to Canada, Mrs. Hu has been actively involved in her children’s education: “I hope my children do well in school and get into a good university in the future.... Therefore, I became involved in their education. I participated in their school life more than I did in Taiwan.” Mrs. Hu did not speak any English when she first came here; neither did her four children. Being a mother, she had to be strong to protect and help her children:

My sisters from Toronto told me that I could hide at home all day long because I don’t understand English. They asked me to think of my children. So I tried to step out and explore and understand the new environment better.... Although my English is poor, I often volunteered at the school. Most teachers in my children’s school know me.

Mrs. Hu currently helps out in the school library. She is also a parent driver for school events.

Mrs. Hu did not have a positive musical experience when she was young: “I received bad grades in music because I didn’t know how to read music. My teacher could

not stand me.... I guess I was just not interested in music. I liked playing sports more.”

As a child, Mrs. Hu has been considered a “tomboy” because of her interest in sports. She further explained to me that “I was not interested in music because I didn’t understand it. I don’t listen to [classical] music because I don’t understand it.... I listen to popular music though.” Apparently, Mr. Hu has a different musical taste than Mrs. Hu. He enjoys listening to classical music, especially opera. He often listens to his classical collections when he drives. As a result, when the children are in the car with their father, they are exposed to classical music. On the other hand, when the Mrs. Hu drives, the children are exposed to Taiwanese popular music.

Because Mrs. Hu did not have appropriate musical training in her life, she did not want her children to miss the learning opportunity:

I don’t want them to be like me. It’s better for them to understand music.... I want them to enjoy music.... And because Jack is always active and cannot concentrate well, [my husband and I] thought maybe taking piano lessons would help calm him down.... Also, 99% of the Chinese children in Vancouver are taking piano lessons. If my children didn’t learn piano, it’s more like they would be falling behind.

Therefore, her children started taking piano lessons from a young age. Jane first enrolled in Yamaha group lessons and later on switched to private music lessons in Taiwan. Jack and Tina received their first piano lessons in Canada. Like most parents, Mrs. Hu found private music teachers through referrals from friends. Jane’s first piano teacher in Canada lived far away. It was inconvenient for Mrs. Hu to drive her oldest daughter to the lessons because she had to bring the three younger ones along. When it was time for Jack and Tina to take lessons, Mrs. Hu hired Sally to teach in her home. The older trio took lessons while the youngest one observed his brother and sisters: “I was tired enough of watching over the older trio. I wanted to wait a bit before I sent the youngest one to lessons.”

As Mrs. Hu did not understand the materials that her children were learning in their piano lessons, she limited her engagement by monitoring and reminding them to practice.

She also sat with her children during the beginning stages of their piano learning: “The most difficult task in this private music lesson thing was to remind them to practice. The girls would practice voluntarily. But Jack! I had to yell at him all the time.” It seems that Mrs. Hu was going through a critical period with Jack:

I don’t know what to do with Jack. He always gives me a headache. Unlike his sisters who get straight As in school, he always gets Cs. He does not pay attention to his math work. He is careless with his school projects. He is not responsible. He is always dirty. I have to scold him all the time.... I am afraid that he won’t do well when he enters high school.

Mrs. Hu thinks that Mr. Hu’s absences from the family have greatly affected Jack:

My husband never helps me with children’s education. He just provides money.... Whenever I talk to him about Jack, he ends up scolding Jack over the phone.... I feel sorry for my son because he does not have a male role model in the family. My husband only comes here for three months per year. His children barely know him. This is the burden of all families with fathers who work abroad.

Mrs. Hu now holds a part time job in a friend’s café while still playing the role of a responsible mother: “Things will probably get better once my children are older!” She smiled helplessly as we came to the end of the interview.

### **Jack**

Jack had just returned from a basketball game. I had already finished speaking with his mother and now I was waiting to interview him. He was surprised to find me in the kitchen. Apparently, neither Mrs. Hu nor Sally had informed Jack about the study until the moment he sat down. I laid out the Letter of Consent and asked Jack to read it thoroughly. After slowly reading the letter, Jack signed the consent, and we began our conversation, which was held in English.

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Jack is 11 years old and attends William Bridge Elementary School as a Grade 6 student. He was born in Taiwan and moved to Canada with his family in 1999. As the

second child and oldest boy in the family, Jack lives with his mother and his other three siblings in a townhouse in Richmond. His father works abroad and flies in to visit every four or five months: “We don’t usually see him every day. But we use the Internet like MSN to talk to each other.” Jack enjoys spending time with his father. “[My Mom] doesn’t usually go out until my dad comes. We go out to eat because my dad likes to eat out.... We usually watch TV or movies cuz he usually brings movies over here.”

Although Jack had one year of primary education in Taiwan, he has no memory of Taiwan. According to Jack, he was active in sports. He was into track and field, and his favorite subjects in school were, and still are, Physical Education and Science. “I have never been good at Art and Language. I am not sure if I like it.... [But I like knowing about] the human body, space, and how trees grow.” Besides Physical Education and Science, Jack was also taking Social Studies, Music, Mathematics, and English-as-a-Second-Language classes in school. In contrast to his mother’s concern about Jack’s school grades, Jack claimed that he “works hard” at his grades. Yet he later contradicted himself by saying that he was “just too lazy” to care about academic subjects.

Jack had been taking piano lessons for about a year. “[when mom found teacher Sally], she decided to let me and my little sister take lessons.... I wanted to try [piano] because I have never tried music before.... I did not choose to play piano. My mom offered it to me.” Besides piano, Jack also played trumpet in the school band. His favorite music was Jazz, and he was not sure whether he likes classical music or not.

As a piano student, Jack says that he practices piano every day for one hour: “If I don’t practice then I don’t know the stuff and the teacher or my mom will get angry at me for not practicing. I am wasting my mother’s money if I don’t practice.” Jack does not

enjoy practicing yet he claimed that “I have to practice to be able to enjoy some music. So I have decided I still have to practice.”

Jack plays and repeats the pieces in sections when he practices “[I play] one hand this line until I memorize it and move to another line.... My teacher does not say how much time I have to play, but my Mom wants me to play one hour.... I sometimes skip [practicing] because I lose interest in piano and I want to do something else.” Jack likes teachers who are encouraging: “S/he has to give full encouragement to the child and make the [music lessons] fun so the child wants to learn more about music.” Jack thinks that his piano teacher’s and parents’ expectations of him from learning piano are to practice well and try to move to the next level.

Jack enjoys taking piano lessons because he likes music. At the time, he said he wanted to be a doctor or a basketball player when he grows up.

### **Music Lessons**

I was sipping caramel macchiato on a Monday afternoon when my cell phone rang: “Hi Kim! I’ll be there in about ten minutes.” “Sure! Take your time!” I replied and closed my phone. I was sitting outside Starbucks in south Richmond. Sally and I were meeting first so she could guide me to Jack’s house. I was unfamiliar with the area and thought it would be wise to leave early. Sally arrived on time, and I followed her car.

Jack’s house, a townhouse in a big complex unit, was just a block from Starbucks. There was no parking space available near the house so we parked on a nearby street and walked. Mrs. Hu was already waiting for us at the door. Sally introduced me to Mrs. Hu and we exchanged greetings. Mrs. Hu welcomed us into her home.

The first thing I saw upon entering the door was an open kitchen with a dining area. The tantalizing aroma of Taiwanese ground pork stew swirled in the air. Mrs. Hu's youngest son was having his after school snack. Generously, Mrs. Hu asked if we would like to sample her cooking. With an appreciative smile, Sally and I politely refused the offer and proceeded to the living room.

The living room has a warm homey feeling. It is divided into two areas. To the left, there is an entertainment centre consisting of two couches around a short table. A big screen TV faces the sitting area. Family pictures decorate the wall. There is also a tall shelf full of books and decorative items. The area to the right is the study area. Two desks are lined up against the wall. Books, videos, and stationary items cover the desks. Beside the desks there is a short book case with CDs and music books. A piano sits against the wall close to the entrance of the living room. This is the place where Sally teaches music.

I started setting up. With all the desks, shelves, and piles of books around the piano, there was not much space to put my tripod. I was looking for an angle so I could have a clear view of the facial expressions and body movements of both student and teacher; it was a difficult task in a crowded space. Due to the shape of the upright piano, I could only set the video recorder on either right or left side of the piano facing the camera towards the teacher and the student. Sally usually sits on the right hand side of the piano, blocking the entrance to the living room. As I would not be able to see Sally's face if I set the tripod on the right side, my only choice was to squeeze the tripod into the corner of the wall between the piano and the book case. I could see Jack's face and movement clearly from this angle, but sometimes Sally's actions were blocked.

Sally planned to spend two and half hours teaching three children that day. She started teaching the younger and older sisters first. Jack had a basketball game so he came



home late and he was the last to have a lesson that day. I interviewed Mrs. Hu in the kitchen while Sally gave lessons to the two girls. Then I waited for Jack to arrive. There was not much to do in the kitchen, so I read Sally's teaching story while I waited.

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As previously mentioned, Sally started teaching piano and music theory after she obtained a music diploma from Vancouver Community College. Instead of waiting at her house for students to come for lessons, Sally drives to students' home and teaches door to door. She organizes her teaching schedules according to the locations of her students' homes. For example, on Mondays Sally teaches in Richmond; Tuesdays she goes to Burnaby, and so on. As she travels all the time, she carries a black leather tote bag which contains the materials and equipment to support her teaching: the RCM handbook for teachers, RCM workbooks for students, technique books, a music dictionary, flash cards for note learning, an electronic metronome, staff paper, stickers for young children, and miscellaneous items such as pencils, erasers, and coloured pencils. Sally also plans her teaching schedule around students' school schedules. She takes regular vacations during summer and Christmas holidays. She also has occasional breaks that usually last no more than a week during the school year when she visits her family in Taiwan. Sally explains her absences in person instead of handing out a written notice.

Sally's approach to music lessons involves weekly lessons, participation in music festivals and annual recitals, and examinations. The weekly lesson usually lasts 30 minutes, 45 minutes, or one hour depending on students' ages and playing levels. There are no pre-written lesson plans for Sally's lessons as would be expected of classroom teachers. Sally plans her lessons in the following way:

I review my teaching every year during the summer vacation. I think about what needs to be improved.... I set up a [teaching] theme every year. And I apply the

theme to all of my students. I concentrated on sight-reading in my first year of learning music. And I used the same method to train my students. The next year I focused on ear training.... [I emphasize a different goal each year]. This is my annual teaching plan. As for the weekly lessons...I plan my lesson according to students' levels and performance. Each student is different. I write down [work for the week] and [things to practice] in the student's notebook. I adjust my teaching after reading the notebook each time.

Sally uses a variety of music materials in her lessons. Although the RCM curriculum is her main focus, she uses method books such as *Piano Adventure* (Faber & Faber, 2000), the *Alfred* series (Palmer, Manus, & Lethco, 1999), and the *John Thompson* series (Thompson, 2005) for her beginner students. Level of difficulty and repertoire are the criteria Sally employs when choosing her teaching materials:

The theory part in the *Adventure* is well explained. The down side is that the technical difficulty of the music in *Adventure* is too easy. Students would have a gap when connecting with the RCM examination materials. Therefore, I use *John Thompson* in between. It has both music theory and technique to bridge the gap between *Adventure* and RCM.... When children reach Grade 3 or 4, they start to think *Adventure* is too easy or their friends are all doing RCM. They express an interest in switching to the RCM system.

Sally is flexible in her use of music materials. She believes that music books are only a means to an end. What really matters is the way one teaches:

Some students' parents ask me to use music books used by the student's elder sibling. I might not [know the particular material] well. But it doesn't concern me much. [Using teaching material] is just one way of teaching. How you teach [the material] is another way. I am flexible. I teach the technique from [the books they already have].... I do not teach all the songs [from a book]. I choose the music according to students' needs and [preferences].

Sally encourages her students to participate in music festivals: "I want them to enjoy going" she said. Private music teachers obtain information about music festivals through several channels. Music teacher associations send out e-mails to notify teachers about upcoming music events. Educational journals and newsletters announce coming events. Many music teachers know about major music festivals because they once participated in the festivals themselves. Once teachers have entered students into festivals, they continue to receive brochures from the festivals every year. Music stores also display posters and hand out application forms and syllabi for these festivals. After receiving information

about the festivals, Sally conveys the news to her students and asks them if they want to participate. She then submits the application forms for those who wish to go: “I don’t pressure them. I want them to have the experiences [of going to festivals].... It is [beneficial] to listen to what other teachers say about their playing” Sally explained.

Sally holds a recital for her students every year. The purpose of the recital is to provide a goal for self improvement:

[The recital] serves as an annual achievement for my students. It gives them a feeling of accomplishment.... Sometimes my students’ parents ask if their children can start taking examinations. But the playing level is not quite there. So I tell the parents that instead of going to examinations, the recital would serve as a better goal. Children work towards performing in the recital instead of just [practicing for nothing].

The procedures of organizing a recital are similar for all the private music teachers. Before the recital, Sally plans the program and prepares students for the performance. She finds and rents a venue for the recital. Her recital venues are innovative compared to those of other teachers. Most private music teachers hold recitals in churches, recital halls, and their own homes. Sally, on the other hand, held her last recital at a friend’s café where she performed at night. “I wanted to try something different,” she said. She rented a piano from the nearby piano store and had it tuned for the day. She collected a fee from students to cover rental and food costs. The owner of the café was in charge of food. On the recital day, Sally considered herself a “baby sitter.” She attended to her students while her friends helped her coordinate the event by being the MC, handing out program notes, and keeping everything else in order: “My job was to make students less nervous that day!” Sally explains. After the recital, parents and students lingered in the café to chat and eat. This social gathering provided an opportunity for Sally’s students and parents to exchange experiences with each other. As these students and parents are typically limited to their own family experiences with musical learning, it is positive to meet others who

have undertaken a similar path. Such interaction promotes a sense of belonging in both students and parents. Sally, in this case, is the leader of this small community.

As I have explained in previous stories, taking music examinations is a norm in the world of private music lessons. Sally sends her students to the RCM examinations: “Taking exams is necessary. People become lazy without a specific goal. The exam acts as a [practice] goal for students.” However, Sally does not encourage students to take examinations when they are too young: “I want to focus on nurturing an interest [in music] first. I don’t want the pressure of an exam to turn [students] against [playing.]” Sally thinks that a student who has reached Grade 4 or 9-years old is mature enough to start taking music examinations: “They start to understand more. If you want them to take an exam, you need to let them know why. The younger ones do not understand the need. You could just end up pushing them until they turn against it.” Interestingly, Sally does not wish her students to take an examination every year. Rather, she encourages students to participate in different activities each year:

I don’t want my students to take an examination every year. I want them to go to music festivals or play in recitals instead. For beginners, I typically ask them to take one exam [to verify that they are at a certain level]. Then I usually let them skip grades until they reach intermediate level. Once they reach intermediate level, I [act] accordingly. If the student is not self motivated, then I make the student take an exam each year [because the exam serves as a goal for that student.] If the student is motivated enough to [practice] without [a pushing force], then they are okay to skip RCM grades.

Since many children take examinations for popular instruments such as piano and violin, the RCM has published a series of music books to support their syllabus. The conservatory’s technique, studies, and repertoire books are three main resources for piano lessons and are available from preliminary to Grade 10. The technique books include all the required technical elements such as scales, dominant seventh chords, and arpeggios for each grade. The book of studies contains pieces specifically selected to develop

certain techniques such as staccato and octave intervals. Music of different genres and from different historic periods fills the repertoire books. Supplementary materials such as student workbooks, training books for sight-reading and ear training are also available for each grade. Furthermore, a teacher's handbook that lists the background, analysis, and suggestions for practicing for all pieces in all ten grades is published to help teachers have a better understanding of the teaching materials. However, as the majority of Sally's students are Taiwanese immigrants, Sally thinks that the content in the student workbooks is difficult for her students to understand:

I understand the purpose of the student book. There are theoretical terms and information [about music] for students to study. The purpose is good. Students should learn the [proper musical term]...but many of the [professional] words in the book are difficult [for people with poor English ability]... how can we explain those to our students when we also have problems understanding the language used in the book? Local teachers [who are raised in Canada] might know how to use the book [because they are fluent in English]. Teachers like us that [were educated half in our original country and half in Canada] are okay [with the understanding.] But teachers who are new to the country, they might not know how to use that book [because of their poor English].

Sally's words remind me of my own piano learning experience when I first came to Canada. My piano teacher at that time was Mrs. Hsu, who was from mainland China. I was preparing for the Grade 10 RCM examination, my first music examination in Canada. Mrs. Hsu was a passionate teacher who did not give up music after years of calamitous forced labor during China's Cultural Revolution. Mrs. Hsu's teaching was from the Russian piano school, which emphasizes precision and technique (Jiao, 2007). My playing technique improved significantly under her guidance. However, since Mrs. Hsu was also a new immigrant at that time; she was not familiar with the RCM system. We spent a lot of time working on the required five pieces and two studies. Playing these pieces was not difficult. What I did not enjoy much were the technical requirements. When I did piano examinations in Taiwan, all I needed to play were the parallel scales,

cadences, and tonic arpeggios of the 26 major and minor keys. In the RCM piano syllabus, the requirements for the Grade 10 technique are: major and minor scales in parallel motion, scales, thirds, sixths, and tenths, formula patterns, chromatic scales, arpeggios in tonic, dominant 7<sup>th</sup>, and diminished 7<sup>th</sup>, tonic four note chords solid and broken, dominant 7<sup>th</sup> and diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chords solid and broken, and octave scales (Royal Conservatory of Music, 2008). Mrs. Hsu did not realize that I was not familiar with the new requirements. We did not start to practice the technical components until a month before the examination and we never had time to go over the sight-reading and ear training. I was also struggling with English at that time. Given that I had never played chords and arpeggios in dominant seventh and diminished seventh patterns in Taiwan, terms like dominant seventh, diminished seventh, and arpeggios were alien to me.

Although Mrs. Hsu explained the theoretical concepts behind these chords and arpeggios to me in Mandarin, I still had a hard time associating my understanding in Chinese with the English terms. It was difficult enough to memorize the required fingerings for these technical excerpts, not to mention that I had to memorize and differentiate between the dominant 7<sup>th</sup> of D major and the dominant 7<sup>th</sup> starting on D. Although I managed to complete the Grade 10 examination, the last minute cramming of the technical requirements remains a dreadful memory. Until today, I do not understand why both Mrs. Hsu and I did not find out about the technical requirements earlier. Was it because that both of us were new to the RCM system? Or was it because Mrs. Hsu assumed that I knew all the required technical elements since I had reached the Grade 10 playing level?

Back then, I did not know about student workbooks and the teacher handbook. Teaching and learning RCM meant fulfilling the requirements of the syllabi. As long as I played the repertoire, the studies, and the technique from the syllabi, I was able to obtain

a certificate for a particular grade. This is how I was taught. Eventually I started to teach in the same way. It was not until I began this Ph.D. program that I started to have doubts about what and how I taught and, for the first time, I really looked into the RCM materials. I bought the entire package (including repertoire books primary level to Grade 10, studies primary level to Grade 10, technical books for each grade, corresponding music CDs for each grade, the teacher's handbook, students' workbooks, and the new syllabus). I studied the materials, went online to read about the reviews, and attended RCM workshops. Perhaps not surprisingly, my students' examination marks went up after I had a deeper understanding of the system.

Unfortunately, it costs money and time to study a curriculum as I did. The complete 2008 piano package costs more than \$600 Canadian, and this was a limited special offer for teachers and students who wished to purchase the complete set upon release. It costs more to buy each book separately. When I talked to the clerk in the local music store, she told me that people usually buy the books separately rather than buying the whole package. And she also mentioned that there is a small percentage of people buying the teacher's handbook and the student workbooks. Her words suggested that many piano teachers and students are not using the supplementary materials.

Back to Sally's comments about how she thinks it is difficult for non English speakers to understand the content of student workbook. The purpose of both the teacher's handbook and student workbooks is to provide detailed background information as well as serve as a guide for music analysis. Background stories of composers, descriptions of musical terms and musical styles, various exercises, and games are included in the student workbook to help students explore further their repertoire pieces (Royal Conservatory of Music, 2008). The language used in the student workbook is

based on the assumption that students have acquired the expected theoretical knowledge of the grade level. For example, a Grade 6 piano student is expected to be able to identify the tonic and dominant keys, perfect cadences, and transposing keys, as these are the exercises included in the Grade 6 student workbooks. Yet there are students who might have already achieved the Grade 6 piano level technically but still have not learned the accompanying music theory. Many Taiwanese immigrant children, for example, come from a background where music analysis and music theory are set aside until more advanced levels. Such students might encounter considerable difficulty in understanding the content of the student workbooks, especially without proper teacher guidance. This challenge is in addition to language considerations.

Unlike university music education programs that prepare music teachers to teach in schools, immigrant private music teachers and students appear to discover on their own different approaches to the study of music once they arrive in Canada — a difference that does not readily come to their attention. Many private music teachers immigrate to Canada from all over the world; to earn a living, many of them start teaching immediately. In addition to the RCM system, several other music examination systems, such as Conservatory Canada and London College of Music, are currently being used in Canada. Immigrant teachers who prepare their students for these examinations do so without knowing that their approach may be inappropriate. To teach with materials in a language unfamiliar to both students and teachers can be even more challenging. The Royal Conservatory of Music holds workshops regularly and mails out newsletter to help teachers enhance their professional skills and have a better understanding of the system. Nevertheless, the workshops and the newsletter might not help the new immigrant teachers understand the system because of the language limitation.



In addition to discussing the proper usage of materials for RCM examinations, Sally also expressed her views about changes in examination fees and syllabi:

It has become very expensive to do examinations nowadays. It seems that [the RCM] increases its fee every few years. Parents get scared looking at the fee.... Also, [the RCM] changes the syllabus every few years, and new editions of the music books come out when the syllabus changes. Students have to keep up with the newest editions. It is costing more and more money to stay with the system.

The fees for taking RCM examinations have indeed increased since I took the examination. The cost for an examination varies depending on the category and student level. On the current RCM website, Grade 1 piano students currently spend \$95 for their piano test whereas Grade 10 students pay \$307 for the practical examination. In addition to the fee for practical examinations, students need to take the corresponding theory examinations in order to obtain the desired certificate. Advanced Rudiments theory (required for Grade 8 practical), for example, costs \$109. It is \$124 for students who take Grade 5 music analysis (required for Grade 10 practical). The examination fees increase with the student level (Royal Conservatory of Music Examinations, 2009).

So far, I have heard no complaints about the fee changes from my students' parents. I have, however, sometimes been frustrated with the constant revision of the music books. *The Enjoyment of Music* (Machlis & Forney, 2008), for example, is the recommended textbook for the RCM music history examination. With the supplementary listening CD, the program costs almost \$200 per package. Every few years, the publisher releases a new edition of *The Enjoyment of Music*; the old edition is then discontinued. The changes made in the new edition are not significant; different illustrations of art works are added, and paragraphs and some text have been re-arranged. The major musical works discussed in the book remain the same. Since some of my students are using books from their older siblings and some of them are new learners, I have to buy a package every time a new edition is out in order to accommodate my students' needs and because I like to keep my

library up to date. There are also times when I cannot find a piano accompaniment for my violin students because they are using the old violin series for the examination and I only have the new books. I often end up buying sheet music just to provide piano accompaniments for my students' examinations. To stay with the RCM examination is indeed a big investment for both teachers and students.

Sally sees herself as a music teacher who helps students develop the fundamentals of piano playing. She claims: "I want all my students to have strong technical skills and a solid knowledge of theory." The purpose of learning music, according to Sally, is to "nurture an interest that students enjoy and use to brighten their lives. Music fosters one's patience and helps release stress." Sally describes herself as a "nice" teacher: "My students probably think I am nice. I am easy to talk to and bargain with.... I let a lot of things slip by. Yet I try to [stay with my principles]. And my students cooperate with me most of time."

For Sally, the greatest success in teaching music is to see her students feel the happiness that music brings:

I have a student who is from a single family. There are problems in his family. He did not talk much when he first studied with me — a melancholy child. After he started to have lessons with me, his grandparents came to me and told me that he had become a happier child. He smiles more. My music teaching opened up this child. This is my biggest achievement so far.

Besides feeling joy for her student's change of behavior, Sally has become a better musician through teaching: "I have gained a lot from teaching. I have built a stronger playing technique. My sight-reading and listening are also improved." On the other hand, Sally feels most challenged when she and her students' parents have different learning goals:

I meet this situation quite often. I let parents know how their children are doing all the time. But some parents want their child to go through all [RCM] levels in a short time regardless of the child's real ability. It is impossible to do that.... I try to satisfy the parents' requests, but it creates pressure [for students and me]. It's hard

to build one's technique in a short time. It is difficult to explain to parents and make them understand.

Chinese parents tend to have high expectations for their children (Brand, 2002). However, unlike academic subjects which can be memorized and crammed into the brain in a short time, learning an instrument requires more than memory work. Time is needed to develop both technical skills and musicianship. Each child has a different rate of learning, and parents need to realize that. I have also encountered this situation in my teaching.

Questions like "Why does it take so long to go through a level?" or "How come my friends' child has only to study one year and he has already passed Grade 4?" have arisen. These questions are usually from parents who do not play an instrument. I find it useful to explain the RCM criteria for passing a certain level to these parents. Once they understand the requirements, they can see clearly that their children have not yet achieved the expected standards. Providing parents with realistic expectations for their children, I believe, is as important as teaching music to children.

The other thing that bothers Sally in her teaching career is the fact that some students' parents bargain about fees:

Some parents haggle with me when they come to me the first time. For example, I charge \$30 per hour. If I teach three children in the same family, the parent is supposed to pay me \$90. But she haggles with me to reduce the fee for three to \$60 or \$70 .... I am still trying to figure out how to solve this problem.

Haggling with the fee is another cultural phenomenon in Taiwan. We bargain when we buy clothes from a street vendor. We ask for discounts and freebies when we go to department stores: "Get more for less" seems to be the motto of the society. In my experience, there is really no way to stop Taiwanese parents from bargaining. Teachers need to be firm about how much they charge. As the British Columbia Registered Music Teachers Association (2008) has suggested, having a written policy stating lesson fees might help students' parents know where the teacher stands.

As I predicted, Sally is not a member of a music teacher association. She knows about the association but has not had the time to apply: “I called the association and it required some documents. I haven’t had the time to prepare these documents yet. I have stalled for couple of years already.” Because of Sally’s busy teaching schedule, she does not have time for most professional workshops. I asked if she reads professional journals or books (journal articles or books based on research). Apparently, rather than read professional journals or books, Sally studies pedagogical books (books that show how to teach) more. She has a tall shelf full of music methods books and sheet music sitting in the living room of her house.

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“You are back! Teacher Kim is waiting in the kitchen. Go say hi!” I heard Mrs. Ho’s voice as Jack strolled into the kitchen with a basketball in his hands and a backpack over his shoulder. He politely greeted me and we began to talk; we talked for 30 minutes. Then we heard Sally call Jack. It was Jack’s turn to have piano lesson. I walked to the living room with him. After readjusting the angle of the camera and turning on the record button, I again retreated to the kitchen while the teacher and student had their lesson.

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Of the five student participants in this study, Jack is the only one not taking an examination. This situation allows Sally more freedom in choosing teaching materials for Jack. Jack was playing RCM Grade 3 piano books combined with the *John Thompson* series (Thompson, 2005) during my observations. All Jack’s piano books were passed down from his older sister. Mrs. Hu also mentioned that she has a group of friends who shared children’s music books. This is a cost saving measure to avoid the illegal copying of music.

Contrary to Colprit's (2000) conclusion that private music lessons have music making (both student performance and teacher modeling) as the principle activity of the lesson, Sally spends more time discussing music theory and analyzing the music. Instead of teaching from a music theory workbook, Sally teaches music rudiments based on the repertoire. For example, when Jack was playing a piece using perfect intervals as the left hand harmony, Sally explained perfect intervals. She then asked Jack to circle all the perfect intervals in the piece with a pencil crayon for homework. Sally believes that music theory should not stand alone; students only understand music theory when it is applied to the music they are playing:

I studied music rudiments when I was younger. They didn't mean much to me. My teachers in Taiwan and my Chinese teacher in Vancouver emphasized the performing part more. Although they taught me music theory, it was because I had to write a theory test. I always thought that music theory and playing piano were two separate things.... When I first started taking music in college, my piano teacher asked me to figure out the [chord progressions] in the music. I didn't know how to do it. That's when I realized the importance of learning music theory. I don't want my students to have the same experience I did. So I am integrating music theory into my lessons as much as I can. I want them to feel that music theory and music itself are inseparable. I want them to understand the structure and the details of a piece before they actually play it.

When learning a new piece, instead of starting by sight-reading the music, Sally starts with a discussion of the music:

The first thing I do is to analyze the music with them, starting with identifying the keys. They need to know the home key and new keys in each section. They need to know the basic chords. We discuss articulations. We explore the patterns, motives, and sequences.... We look at the counting. What is the rhythm? Where do we need to pay attention?

The above process evidently happened in all Jack's lessons. Sally sometimes stopped in the middle of the exploration to bring out a theoretical point. She repeatedly explained the point until she made sure that Jack understood it. It was not until both had explored the music that they began sight-reading.

Counting the beats and getting the correct rhythms were two elements that Sally emphasized throughout the lessons. When Jack was learning new music, Sally usually

asked him to practice “singing the rhythms” first. “Singing the rhythms” is the equivalent of using the rhythm syllables from the Kodály Method (Choksy, 1998), where different syllables are assigned to specific note values to express the durations. For example, “Ta” is the syllable for a quarter note; “Ti” is the syllable for an eighth note. Sally’s “singing the rhythm” varies from the original Kodály syllables. Instead of “Ta –a” for a half note, Sally used “Ta –two”; “Ta-a-a-a” for whole note became “Ta-two-three-four.” Rhythm syllables are largely used in elementary school music education. I rarely see it in piano method books. I was curious about where Sally heard about this method. Apparently, she implemented “singing the rhythms” into her lessons without knowing about the Kodály Method:

I heard one of my students reciting the syllables when I asked him what the notes were. I asked him where these syllables came from. He had learned them in a group music course. He only told me of the syllables for quarter notes and eighth notes. I created other syllables on my own. I don’t know if they are similar to the original.... It’s an effective way to teach rhythms.

After singing the rhythms, Jack sight-reading the notes while doing “spoken counting” at the same time. “Spoken counting” refers to counting the beat out loud while playing: “One-two-three-four” or “One and two and three and four” with “and” as the second half of the beat. When Sally needed to explain the dotted rhythms, she subdivided the beat further into smaller units: “One-i-an-de, two-i-an-de, three-i-an-de, four-i-an-de.” This counting exercise helps create a duration concept of note values. However, when Jack was busy finding the notes on the keyboard and matching the fingers to the notes, it was hard for him to keep counting at the same time. He was sometimes confused because he was attempting to multitask.

Teaching the expressive quality of music is difficult (Karlsson & Juslin, 2008). Dynamics, for example, are subjective. How loud is loud? How soft is soft? Each person has his/her own interpretation of loudness and softness. According to Karlsson and Juslin,

the ability to play expressively is often related to music talent, which is difficult to learn. It is also difficult to convey a knowledge of musical expression in words. Furthermore, the teaching of musical expression is usually implicit and rarely guided by explicit goals.

Similar to Karlsson and Juslin's finding (2008), Sally taught music expression with an intuitive approach. Here is an example from the second observation portraying Sally's lesson on dynamics:

Sally: Is this mezzo forte or piano?

Jack: Mezzo forte.

Sally: Mezzo forte. I want it sound like mezzo forte. What's the sound of mezzo forte?

Jack: Middle?

Sally: You have to get the idea of the sound. What's the middle sound?

Jack: [plays a few notes of the phrase.]

Sally: It's piano here. You played forte. I want you to think about how loud you want your mezzo forte to be. [plays to demonstrate the different volume] This loud, this loud, or this loud? The volume that you play normally belongs to mezzo forte. Then you have to lift up a little bit of weight here [demonstrates on the piano]. Think about it before you play.... Now we come to the crescendo. What does it mean?

Jack: Gradually getting louder.

Sally: How do we gradually get louder? For example, if you say "one two three four five," how do you speak it with a gradually getting-louder voice.

Jack: One, two, three, four, five.

Sally: I did not hear your numbers becoming louder. What do you do to make it becoming louder?

Jack: One, two, three, four, five.

Sally: Again, let's exaggerate a little bit more.

Jack: One, two, three, four, five.

Sally: You say the words clearly. But you don't show the difference in loud and soft.

Jack: One, two, three, four, five.

Sally: You do not have to be scared of other people. [She asks Jack to ignore the camera.]

Jack: Okay.

Sally: I want "one, two, three, four, five" becoming louder and louder. Try again!

Jack: One, two, three, four, five.

Sally: This is what I want to hear. One, two, three, four, five.

Jack: Oh!

Sally: This is what I called crescendo. Do you hear that? Can you show me?

Jack: One, two, three, four, five.

Sally: No, not enough, one more time.

Jack: one, two, three, four, five.

Sally: Please yell it.

Jack: One, two, three, four, five

Sally: Yes! See, the crescendo is One, two, three, four, five. The volume increases one after another. Okay. Same rule applies, where does our crescendo start?

Jack: Here. Two bars.

Sally: One, two, three, four, five. It starts here. Gradually to forte. [Sally draws.

She divides the two bars and uses the five numbers to tell Jack how the crescendo applies to the two bars.]

Jack: okay.

Sally: Did you see the crescendo above this phrase? You need to associate different volume with different sections. This is piano, then next section becomes mezzo forte. Then we become louder and louder. [She marks the dynamic levels on music.]

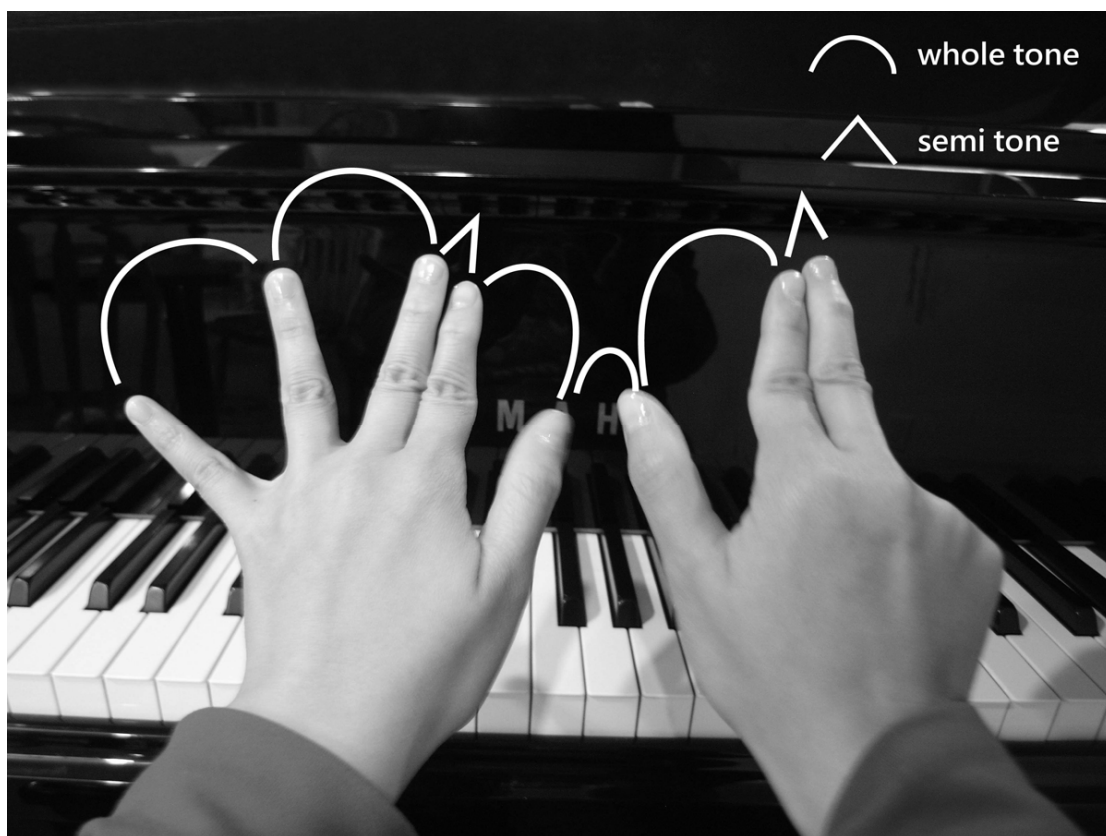
The use of speaking voice to model the crescendo is effective because she relates an unknown — musical crescendo — to a known (speech). This is a learning principle identified by, among others, Bergethon, Boardman, and Montgomery (1997). Jack was able to grasp the concept of “gradually getting louder” after the explanation. Jack is, according to Bergethon et al., gaining a mental image of the crescendo. By assigning different dynamics to different phrases, Sally provided a graphic image which stands for the concept of the dynamics for Jack. Jack then “develops the ability to realize that symbols remind us of sound” (p. 53). However, Sally’s teaching of dynamics seems to be mechanical. She is asking Jack to follow the dynamic indications without discussing why they are employing these dynamics. Sally had mentioned earlier that she had had problems interpreting music when she was a college student. Could it be that following the dynamic symbols in the music books is the only way she knows to show different dynamics to her students because that is how she learned to express the quality of dynamics herself?

Another interesting point about Sally’s teaching of dynamics was the use of breathing. These were Sally words when she asked Jack to play softly: “Hold your breath. You can use your breath to control the sound. Breathe in then hold your breath. Relax your wrist. Listen to yourself if this is real soft...real soft. Shush...soft.” She asked Jack to breathe in very hard when playing crescendo. Sally is trying to show her students how to express dynamics the way she experiences them when she plays. Perhaps using metaphor to illustrate dynamics would be more helpful under these circumstances.



Sally has an intriguing way of showing her students the relationship between notes in a major scale. She was reminding Jack about the tones and semitones in a major scale when she said: “If you forget, please use your hands to help you remember.” Jack immediately extended his hands. Each finger represents one degree of the major scale. The fingers are opened leaving a space in between to indicate whole tones. The fingers are together to indicate semitones. So Jack ended up having a hand position (See Figure 7.1) that has the index and the middle finger sticking together in both hands while other fingers are stretched wide open. Jack then places his hands directly on the keyboard. As the hand position mirrors how one plays a major scale using two hands (See Figure 7.2), Jack had no problem finding the patterns of tones and semitones. “I got this idea from one of the method books I studied. Jack couldn’t remember the patterns but he could remember the finger positions,” Sally explained.

**Figure 7-1 Sally's Hand Position Showing a Major Scale**



**Figure 7-2 Using Sally's Hand Position to Form a F major Scale**



Of the four lessons I observed, three lessons began with checking the written assignment from the previous week. A notebook played a significant role in these lessons; it recorded Jack's to do list for the week and it contained all the theory concepts that Sally wanted Jack to know from the lessons. Sally also assigned written exercises such as writing key signatures and scales. Specific instructions for practicing were given: "I want you to check your keys.... Think about your intervals.... You need to play it 20 times." When Jack was prepared for his lesson, Sally spent more time adding new material to the notebook. On the other hand, Sally read more from the notebook when Jack was not prepared and she had to review from last week's notes.

Repetition is the key practice strategy in Sally's lessons. When working on a piece, Sally usually breaks the piece into smaller sections and works on each section. She asks Jack to solve a problem through repetition. For example, when Jack had trouble counting a rhythm, he had to sing the rhythm repeatedly until he got it right. He had to repeat a passage until he became familiar with the notes and the rhythms. He even had to write the key signatures and scales "five times." Furthermore, Sally asked Jack to practice using repetition at home: "You need to play these two bars 20 times.... This phrase I want you to play 10 times." According to Hallam (1998a), "repetitious practise [helps students] to automatize their developing cognitive, aural and technical skills" (p. 145). However, repetition without understanding the goal is insufficient, especially when students need to address specific problems in their practice (Pitts et al., 2000a).

Teacher modeling was evident throughout the lessons. One thing I noticed is that Sally demonstrated mostly with either her singing voice or speaking voice. Similarly to

Rose and Buell's (1998) findings, Sally used singing largely to model pitch, phrasing, shaping, rhythm, tempo, dynamics, and intervals. Sally counted with her speaking voice and clapped with her hands to give beats; she talked about articulation. Sally demonstrated less on the piano. She played right hand melodies for Jack while he practiced with his left hand. She played a note here and there to show Jack the right accidentals. She demonstrated a new song once for Jack during my second visit; that was as the only time. Sally later on told me that she played little on purpose: "I don't play for my students unless it's necessary. I want my students to explore the music by themselves, not imitate my playing. I want them to make their own music."

Mandarin and English were the two languages spoken in the lessons. Although Jack understands both languages well, he tends to use more English. Sally used Mandarin when she gave instructions but English for musical terms or theory-related subjects. There were times when Jack didn't get Sally's Mandarin so she had to repeat the ideas in English:

I use English because it's the local language here. It is better to teach the musical terms in English. When I explain stuff or give instructions, I tend to use a language that students are more familiar with. Some children are more comfortable with Mandarin; some are not. I have to switch back and forth between the two. It doesn't matter which language I use. What matters is that students understand what I want them to do.

As West and Rostvall (2003) found in their research, interactions between Sally and Jack were initiated by Sally during the four lessons I observed. Sally was the one who asked questions, provided answers, and gave instructions. Jack followed Sally's words by playing or responding in short sentences. Jack was used being told what to do. In spite of Sally's intention to allow students to make the music their own, Jack played a passive role in his lessons. Sally, on the other hand, was the source of authority. Her instructions sometimes sounded like giving orders with an authoritarian tone: "I want you to write this

for five times.... I want you to look at the key signatures.... You have to tell me how many perfect intervals there are in this piece.” Jack usually obeyed by answering “yes” or “okay.” However, there were times that Jack neglected to practice. He came to the first observation so unprepared that Sally had to review the entire lesson from the previous week. He also did not write his theory assignments for the third and fourth lessons. “I don’t know how to do it,” he claimed. It’s hard to tell if Jack really didn’t understand the work or if he was just being lazy and finding excuses. Sally dealt with the situation by going through the assignment with Jack:

When students do not finish their assignments right away, they forget about how to do them. I don’t care if they really don’t understand or if they are using it as an excuse. When they tell me that they don’t understand, I take the time to work with them until they get it.

General verbal encouragement such as “Good” and “well done” were given during all four lessons. Specific praise was also provided. For example, Jack practiced in sections as Sally had asked. He marked a piece for things that he needed to pay attention to such as fingerings and accidentals. Sally encouraged Jack by saying: “I really like how you prepared the music yourself. You are a great student. Let’s do it next time you practice.” Sally handed out stickers at the end of each lesson as a reward. I observed no actual punishment during the four lessons. Sally’s punishment is to make students work harder during the lessons: “If they don’t come prepared, I punish them by making them miserable in the lessons. I make them work extra hard so they feel uncomfortable.” Ironically, the above words contradict her earlier remarks about how she wants to foster students’ enjoyment of music.

Sally obtains her teaching ideas from several sources, as Ward (2004) indicated. First, she teaches as she was taught: “You received ideas from your teacher; you should definitely pass on those good things to your students.” Secondly, she develops ideas from

her own learning experience; adding music analysis to her lessons is one example.

Thirdly, she learns teaching techniques from piano method books: “I receive a lot of information. Some parents want to save money. They want me to use the old books that they already have in the house. I learn a lot from those books.” Lastly, she learns how to teach from teaching: “You think about how you could help this student improve and you come up with your own teaching ideas.” Sally had some interesting instructional terms. “Hand dropping” means playing detached; “move” refers to a change of hand positions; and “skipping” explains the intervals in thirds. Sally gave an incorrect definition in the first lesson. For example, “*Da Capo al Fine*” in music terminology is Italian for playing from the beginning to the end. “*Da capo*” means from the beginning. “*Al Fine*” means to the end. Sally told Jack that “*Da capo* is to the ending.” I wasn’t sure if Sally made a mistake or if she really defines “*Da capo*” the way she did, so I inquired about it. It turns out that she was nervous during the first lesson: “I was nervous because of the camera. I felt uncomfortable. I was afraid that I might make mistakes. It seems the more nervous I get, the more mistakes I make [laugh]. I got used to [the camera] after a while though.” There were no more mistakes in the next three lessons. Jack, for his part, did not seem to be affected by the camera besides occasional smiles towards the camera when he received praise from his teacher. Sally mentioned that Jack had practiced more and prepared for the recorded lessons.

Sally encourages her students’ parents to attend the lessons, especially those parents with young beginners and new students:

I ask parents to sit in on the lessons for young beginners, not the older ones. Also, I ask parents of new students to sit in on the lessons for the first 6 months.... It is difficult for children to adjust to a new teacher. Each teacher has a different teaching style. And children need to get used to the new style. I sometimes have problem explaining myself. Therefore, I hope these parents will help their children adjust to a new style by sitting in on the lessons and talking to the children when necessary.

As her living room is where Sally teaches, Mrs. Hu is usually around when her children have lessons. Although she did not stay close to the piano all the time, she listened to the lessons from the kitchen.

Sally sees her students' parents as her friends: "The [relationship] between my students' parents and me is very important. When you treat them as friends, they will treat you well in return." She believes that teacher, student, and parents should be a team in private music teaching and learning:

I always tell both the students and their parents that we are a team. [I encourage students] to talk to me about the things that they do not dare to tell their parents [so I can help them communicate with their parents better]. [I also encourage] parents to communicate to me [as much as possible]. We are not three individuals. We are a team. It is only when we work together that [students] achieve more. I don't want people to feel that I am a teacher with authority. We are all the same. I want [my students and parents] to accept me well.

Sally communicates with her students' parents mostly in person. She talks to the parents about how their children are doing after each lesson. Sally usually talks to parents alone. Nevertheless, she specifically asks for the child's presence when she gives compliments or warnings.

Sally's expectations of students tie into her teaching philosophy: "I hope my students are not playing for the purpose of taking examinations. I hope they enjoy music and use music as a way to manage emotions. These are my expectations." Her expectations of the parents are more practical: "I expect they won't bargain with me so much with the tuition fee. [laugh] And I wish they were more involved in their children's lessons." Nevertheless, Sally thinks her students' parents expect her to "make students enjoy music." This corresponds with Mrs. Hu's expectation: "I hope the teacher can give my children what she has learned. I don't want my children to go through all the examination levels. I just want them to have an interest which they can enjoy."

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“Kim! We are done!” It was the end of Sally’s teaching. I went into the living room to collect my equipment while Sally was busy chatting with Mrs. Hu and writing down the assignments for the week. It was close to dinner time, and the four children gathered around in the living room to watch TV. I finished packing. Sally and I waved farewell to the family and, together, we walked back to our cars. Sally had done her job. The learning depends on how well Jack practices. I have already talked about Jack’s practice habits and Mrs. Hu’s involvement in the private music lessons in their personal stories but I want to explore further the valuing of private music learning in the interactions between Jack and his mother.

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Mrs. Hu sends her children to private music lessons because it was something she missed as a child: “My children will learn things that I didn’t learn as a child. They can play the music that they prefer anytime.” She also believes that taking piano lessons is the thing to do for Taiwanese immigrants: “I would feel wrong if my children were not taking lessons as everyone else.” She hopes piano lessons will help improve Jack’s patience: “Jack moves all the time. His father suggests that maybe he will concentrate more after taking piano. I don’t think it has worked well though.” She did not expect much from her children’s music lessons: “I hope that my children don’t make learning how to play an instrument a dreadful experience. I want the learning to be enjoyable.”

Jack takes piano lessons because he is told to do so. He learns about the notes and how to play them in his lessons. He likes playing piano but he dislikes doing theory assignments: “I have no time to do it. I have lots of work.” He feels happy when he gets stickers from Sally and becomes upset when he does not pass a song: “If I really want to pass a song and move to the next and [my teacher makes me] practice and practice for

more than a week, I get stressed out and don't want to play anymore." When I asked Jack about how he values music, he gave me an artificial answer — what he thought I wanted to hear. For example, I asked "Do you like taking music lessons and why?" He answered "Yes, you learn more about piano and have more experience with piano. You can go travel around the world and do other music. You can play in the concerts." I suspect that these have been the words that either Mrs. Hu or Sally have been feeding him. From the Mrs. Hu's description of his practice habit, it is clear that Jake takes piano lessons to obey his mother, rather than because he chooses to himself.

The relationship between Mrs. Hu and Jack is tense. Being a mother who is raising four children on her own in a foreign country, Mrs. Hu disciplines her children rigidly in the Taiwanese style. She has high expectations of Jack because he is the eldest son. However, Jack and his siblings are growing up and being educated in Canada. They have to live in one culture in school and another culture at home. As Jack gets older, conflicts increase between his mother and him. In the second interview, Sally told me that Jack missed a lesson because he had run away from home:

I feel that Jack is repressed by his mother. He is full of creativity and has a good nature yet he is suppressed by his mother. His mother is imperious; he is scared of showing his feelings in front of her. He can only vent in his own way. For example, he quarrels with his siblings and fights with his friends. He ran away from home not long ago. Nobody could find him. Not even his mother. His mother got so worried she told me. I cannot barge into how parents educate their child. I could only comfort her by saying that Jack is getting to a rebellious age; he is starting to develop his own ideas. He will come to his senses eventually.... I was shocked the first time I went to their house. His mother slapped his face in front of me. That is why I am cautious when I have lessons with him. His mother is strict enough. I have to teach him in a gentle way.

Apparently, of her four children, Jack is the one that gives Mrs. Hu headaches:

It gives me headaches. He is lazy. He does not study for school. He is untidy. He does not practice for piano.... I don't need to nag his sisters. I don't know if it's because he is a boy that I need to spend so much time nagging.

Mrs. Hu also told me about Jack running away:

He downloaded a game from the Internet on his older sister's new computer and got a virus. His older sister got very angry and started quarrelling with him. Then he complained that I was unfair. His sister has a new computer and he does not. I told him that he does not need one because he only uses it to play games. Then his younger sister told me that he was playing video games when he should be doing homework. He yelled "I didn't do it." then he ran out. I didn't know where he went. I looked for him [at his friends' places] when it happened before. Now that his friends have moved away, he was probably walking around by himself. So I just waited at home. He came home later on. I asked: "I thought you were running away. Why did you come back [laugh]?" Then he told me that he had to make up his piano lesson. I asked him to call Sally. [Sigh] I don't know what else to do with him.

The struggles between Mrs. Hu and Jack have affected Jack's practicing: "I get mad each time I try to get him to practice. I have a bad temperament and I have to take care of four children. Sometimes I can't control myself. I yell at him when he doesn't practice. He talks back in self defense." It seems that Jack does not have a strong inner motivation to practice: "I skipped practice because I am losing interest in the piano and I want to do something else." Making Jack practice has become a burden for Mrs. Hu. "This whole experience is an agony for me.... I don't know [why I keep the lessons] going. It seems odd not having piano lessons in this community.... I hope that my children can gradually learn to be active learners. Then I will feel better." Mrs. Hu said with a faint smile.

Jack stopped taking piano lessons after he enrolled in high school.

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Sally is a knowledge generator. Wishing to provide her students with strong technical skills and a solid knowledge of music theory, she tried to give them as much knowledge as possible within a short time frame. However, what Jack possibly needed was to be motivated to learn before he was able to benefit from the knowledge generated by Sally. The conflict between Jack and his mother may also have decreased his learning

motivation. A teacher with a fast teaching pace, a rebellious teenager, and an authoritarian mother represents the third teaching triad of my study.

## Chapter Eight: A Confident One

*“I don’t read [the professional literatures]. I know that these articles are available but I don’t need them. The relationship between my students and me is like...I need to do anything to make my students swallow all the information that I give them. The important thing is that they learn and understand.”*

### Frank

I was waiting in the corner of a quiet café when Frank entered. Frank was the only male participant in this research. When I first started looking for participants, I talked to a woman at the Taiwanese Canadian Cultural Society. She provided me with a list of Taiwanese Canadian private music teachers currently teaching in Vancouver. Some teachers from the list I already knew; others, I did not. I called all the teachers on the list of 22 and told them about my research to ask if they might be interested. Frank and his wife Patricia were among the teachers I did not know. It was Frank who answered the phone when I first called. I introduced myself and explained my research; he immediately expressed an interest in the study. After discovering that Frank and his wife lived nearby, I went over to their house to leave my Letter of Information. Frank’s wife was not there when I first visited. Frank was in his late thirties and has a warm and humorous personality. As a woman, I did not feel awkward talking to him. After reading the letter, Frank and I set a date for his interview.

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Frank was born and raised in Tainang in southern Taiwan. His father was a government official; his mother, a housewife. He also lived with his two siblings – an older brother and a younger sister. Although he did not provide much information about his family, I gather that his family was like other average Taiwanese families — that the mother was given the responsibility to educate children while the father supported the

family financially.

Unlike other teacher participants in my study, Frank began his musical training rather late. He started as a typical boy in Taiwan who was expected to have high performance in academic subjects:

Education in Taiwan was what we called “spoon-fed education.” [School] tries to feed you with a lot of knowledge. The more you can squeeze into your brain, the better you do on the examinations. [It’s all about memorization.].... But I don’t think you can understand a person depending on how good he is in school.... School in Taiwan was easy for me. I did not put much work into studying.

Although Frank claimed that school was relaxing for him, he was accepted into the top high school in Tainang. Furthermore, he enrolled in the best university in Taiwan – the National Taiwan University, majoring in civil engineering.

While Frank and his brother were trying to get into top schools, Frank’s sister was enrolled in the Music Talent Program: “There are more girls studying music in Taiwan than boys because the society has a stereotype that music is a static activity that is more for girls.” Frank’s sister had been taking piano lessons since she was young. Once she entered the Music Talent Program as a piano major in junior high school, it was mandatory for her to take a secondary instrument; she picked trumpet. Frank, at the same time, was a Grade 10 senior high school student. School academics were never a big deal for him: “I was bored all the time.” In order to help her son be less bored, Frank’s mother decided to let Frank go to trumpet lessons with his sister. Frank followed his mother’s decision obediently: “I didn’t get to learn piano when I was young; so I was happy when given a chance to learn an [instrument].” In the very beginning, Frank and his sister shared one trumpet by switching mouthpieces. As time went by, Frank’s sister started to bring the trumpet to school for rehearsals. Frank was often left with no instrument to play: “I suggested my Mom buy me another instrument. As we already had a trumpet in our house, my Mom bought a French horn instead. That’s when I started taking French horn

lessons instead of trumpet lessons.” Frank had liked classical music since he was a child: “Each person in our family had their own record player. I saved my allowance in order to purchase classical music tapes.” Classical music tapes and classical radio station were Frank’s sources for listening to music. Among the many styles in classical Western art music, Frank prefers the classically oriented sonatas by German composers.

Private French horn lessons continued throughout Frank’s high school and university years. In addition, he joined the concert band during the four years he was in the National Taiwan University. Among the few private French horn teachers Frank had in Taiwan, one teacher had the most impact on Frank: “Luis Stout was the most influential teacher for me technically. He was a former professor from the University of Michigan who came to teach in Taiwan.” Frank studied with Luis Stout for a year: “This teacher helped me develop French horn technique. I learned to play different scales and arpeggios as well as to use alternate fingerings.” It was from this teacher that Frank gained most tips about French horn technique.

It is mandatory that men in Taiwan serve two years of military service when they reach age 18. Men are sent to different areas in the military according to their expertise. Frank was a trumpet player in the military band because of his expertise on a brass instrument. After serving the country for two years, Frank went to the United States for graduate studies.

Frank started his Master of Civil Engineering program at Ohio State University where he met his wife, Patricia. Patricia was pursuing her Master of Piano Performance at that time. They soon fell in love and planned to marry. It might have been a result of Patricia’s influence that, after two years of studying in civil engineering, Frank decided to pursue his master’s degree in music:

Music is an interesting subject to learn. I told myself that I should grab the chance to study music when the opportunity arose. I had this idea from when I was in Taiwan. I would study music if I could.... I knew my wife after I came to the United States. Her being a music major might have had an indirect influence on me. But I made my own decision. Actually, my wife did not want me to be a musician.... Her family values taught her that it was okay to study music as a woman but unwise to marry a musician.... Generally, you cannot make much money being a musician. People don't want their musician daughter to marry another musician because they end up with no money. It's a double standard of traditional values, a cultural conflict.

Knowing that his family would oppose his decision to study music, he switched to music without notifying his parents. He found an assistanceship at the university library fixing computers. In return, the school offered a full time scholarship as long as he maintained his status as a graduate student. He supported himself financially while working towards a master's degree in French horn performance.

Frank's persistence in music changed his parents' attitudes towards him being a musician. When Frank got accepted into the doctoral program in French horn performance at the University of Washington, his parents realized how serious their son was about music and they started to support him financially. Frank spent the first year at the University of Washington as a full time student and the next three years as a part time student. He also married Patricia while he was at the University of Washington.

Although Frank was determined to study music, he had to withdraw from the University of Washington after four years as a doctoral student: "I had completed all the academic courses. What was left were several recitals and the dissertation. The dissertation was going to be difficult for me because I needed to have a calm mind for that." There were several reasons for Frank's withdrawal from the program. First, his advisor at the University of Washington was busy with personal affairs and did not provide Frank with the necessary guidance: "The relationship with your advisor is very important. He was busy getting a divorce at that time. He did not have time to take care



of me.” Secondly, Frank’s second child was born. He needed money: “I still had three years to go to complete the degree requirements. When my second child was born, I felt that it was time to earn some money. I could always get the degree later.” His responsibilities as a father and husband made Frank leave graduate school.

Even though Frank felt neglected by his advisor at the end of the University of Washington period, he still thought of this professor as another private music teacher who had influenced him in important ways: “He taught me to express music. He taught me how to deal with a phrase, how to handle the sound, and how to diagnose sounds.... Louis Stout taught me technique in Taiwan. My advisor from University of Washington taught me music.”

After withdrawing from the University of Washington, Frank came to Canada to be with his family. Because Patricia was already a Canadian citizen, Frank did not have a problem obtaining a permanent resident status; the family settled in Coquitlam, an eastern part of the greater Vancouver area. Frank became a private music teacher teaching both French horn and music theory shortly after he moved to Canada. Most of his students come through referrals, and he usually teaches at his students’ homes. Frank believes that the purpose of learning music is to enjoy music. He sees himself as a funny and interesting teacher who can also be serious when it is necessary.

Besides teaching music, Frank had three other part time jobs at the time of this research. He made batons for conductors, using a self-designed computer program; he was a black jack dealer in a casino at night; furthermore, he worked as a financial consultant for a major financing company. Although he had many students, Frank hopes to teach fewer students and perform more as a musician:

I feel least successful as a musician now because I don’t have time to practice French horn. I am trying to make money to support my family. I teach too many

students.... I have three other jobs. I think a successful musician should not have kids. I do not regret having a family. It was a personal choice. [But sometimes I wish there could be other ways.]

Frank is working hard to be more financially stable so he can have more time for music:

My children are my first priority right now. But I still hope that eventually I can have more time for music.... Music is like opium. Once you get addicted to it, you don't care about other things. I don't care about having [a luxurious life] as long as [my family] can live.... I just want to make good music.

Frank is teaching fewer students now. He is currently working as a full time salesman in an audio system design company. He and his family moved from Coquitlam to Burnaby in 2007.

### **Mrs. Yang**

Mrs. Yang walked into the living room right after I had finished talking with her daughter. Mrs. Yang was in her mid forties. She sat down and waited for my questions. I could feel the tension in the air; Mrs. Yang was not used to talking to a stranger. Aware of her discomfort, I began to tell her about myself. It happened that my father grew up in the same area as Mrs. Yang. After knowing more about me, Mrs. Yang was a bit more at ease and she began telling her story.

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Mrs. Yang was born in Kaohsiung County in southern Taiwan. She got married after graduating from high school. Her husband holds a degree from a vocational school. While her husband worked as a technician for China Steel, Mrs. Yang was the owner of a breakfast eatery. Although both Mr. and Mrs. Yang were working, the job of educating the children still fell on Mrs. Yang's shoulder. Mr. and Mrs. Yang have three children – two girls and one boy. The girl who participated in this study is the middle child, Judy.

As Mrs. Yang explained, both Mr. and Mrs. Yang were from the “labor class.”

Therefore, neither of them had much experience in music except in a general music class:

“I don’t like to listen to music or sing. My husband likes [music] more. [The only music I used to listen] to was folk songs. We came from a poor background. We didn’t have [time/money] for this kind of entertainment.... I used to envy those who played piano when I was younger.” When the Yang’s financial status improved, Mrs. Yang decided to let her daughters take music lessons because she did not want her children to miss what she had missed:

I listened to my customers talking about their children’s music lessons. Some of their children were in the Music Talent Program.... Many children in Taiwan take music lessons either privately or in group class. My oldest daughter took private piano lessons.... One customer’s daughter was taking group violin lessons, and she had a good teacher. This teacher had students who won first places in the examinations/competitions in Kaohsiung. Because of [my friend’s] referral, my second daughter joined the group violin lessons. Her learning was not bad. And she seemed to value [the violin learning] a lot.

It was almost a tradition that students from the same group violin class auditioned for the Music Talent Program. Mrs. Yang’s second daughter, Judy, followed the tradition and applied for the audition. Six months prior to the audition, Mrs. Yang switched Judy from the group class into private lessons in order to prepare for the audition more directly. Judy got a satisfying mark in the audition and was accepted into the Music Talent Program, as Mrs. Yang had expected.

Mrs. Yang had no knowledge about music when her oldest daughter started taking piano lessons so she could not help her daughter practice. When Judy started taking violin lessons, Mrs. Yang wanted to coach her daughter in a more effective way. Therefore, she found a less expensive teacher and started taking lessons herself:

I had piano lessons for a short period. It was a tough time. I was busy with the breakfast eatery and I did not have too much time to practice. I would run upstairs between work and practice for a bit.... It was difficult for me. I had trouble memorizing even simple songs.... I just wanted to have some sense of music so I would be able to identify my daughter’s mistakes when she was practicing.

Fortunately, Judy forged ahead in music learning from her childhood. She always practiced voluntarily with occasional reminders from Mrs. Yang. Although Mrs. Yang

went to all the private violin lessons with Judy, she was too busy to stay with Judy when she practiced at home. She would, however, occasionally monitor Judy's practices while working at the eatery.

The Yang family moved to Canada and settled in Burnaby, British Columbia in 1998. Mrs. Yang explained her reason for immigrating: "I was an adventurous person who liked to travel .... I had never been good with personal relationships in Taiwan. The personal relationships here in Canada are much simpler. I like [living] here better." After immigrating to Canada, Mrs. Yang became a housewife who worked part-time in a supermarket while Mr. Yang worked for the Vancouver School Board.

Although Mrs. Yang was busy taking care of her breakfast business in Taiwan, she was able to observe the education in Taiwan and later on compare it to education in Canada: "The purpose of Canadian schools is to train their citizens to be normal persons [who develop according to their own interests]. Taiwanese/Chinese education, on the other hand, tends to push students to be elitists [in a specific area]." It might be while Judy was in the Music Talent Program in Taiwan that Mrs. Yang drew the above conclusions.

Since Judy expressed great interest in music, she continued her music studies through private lessons after moving to Canada. Mrs. Yang found her a piano teacher after going to the piano teacher's recital. As for the violin, it happened that Judy's violin teacher in Taiwan also immigrated to Canada. In the first few years after moving here, Mrs. Yang drove Judy to Surrey to study with her former teacher. However, this teacher traveled back to Taiwan a lot. In order to keep Judy's learning consistent, Mrs. Yang decided to switch to another teacher. This time, her husband found a lady from mainland China while buying a violin bow from a string shop. Judy has been studying with this

Chinese lady ever since.

Some changes were made after the family moved to the West. Mrs. Yang's attitude towards educating her children, for example, has changed:

I regretted that I did not have time to spend with my daughters when they were younger because I was too busy making a living. Both daughters were raised by childcare givers. As a result, we did not have a good relationship. I quit my job after giving birth to the youngest so I had more time to spend with him. I found that parent-child relationship between us was much better than my relationships with his sisters.... I think I emphasized discipline more for the two girls. I told them to do this and that and they followed my orders. In contrast, I gave the youngest one more freedom and space for exploration. However, I have found that the youngest one is not as disciplined as his sisters.... I also found that I expected less about learning outcomes after I came to Canada. The environment was less stressful. Therefore, parents here are more relaxed [in terms of high performance expectations].

Like her words, Mrs. Yang purposefully constructed the career path of a musician for Judy: "I expect Judy to be a musician because we have already spent so much time and money on her. It's a waste if she does not continue with the journey. Besides, she does not stand out in other subject areas.... [Therefore], unless she had outstanding performance in other areas, I would not agree if she wanted to quit music." When I later asked Mrs. Yang why she was so determined that Judy would be a musician, her words were:

Both my husband and I belong to the laboring class. I feel that having a musician in our family raises our class status [because we can afford to support a musician.] I feel that it adds more artistry into our family when music is played. [Furthermore], it more or less satisfies our vanity when we see [our beautiful girl] perform on the stage.

Finally, Mrs. Yang hopes her daughter learns to not give up easily on her journey of musical learning.

### **Judy**

Judy is the oldest student among the five student participants. Unlike in the other four triads where it was the parents who set up the interviews and communicated with me over the phone, Judy was the one who negotiated directly with me through the entire data

collection period. Judy's mother answered the door when I arrived to interview both mother and daughter. Judy was practicing piano upstairs and came down when she heard the doorbell. Interestingly, Judy wanted to talk first before her mother. She invited me into the living room, and I began to set up. Just as we were about to start talking, Judy's mother walked in with drinks and placed them on the short table. Mrs. Yang was interested in knowing what we were going to talk about in our interview; she wanted to stay and listen to our conversation. Judy, however, smiled at her mother and asked her to leave: "I will feel more comfortable talking if you are not around," she said. Closing the living room door after Mrs. Yang left, Judy began talking.

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Judy started taking violin lessons at age 4. Although she did not remember why she took lessons in the very beginning, she thought it was her mother's idea for her to learn an instrument: "My mother wanted her children to study music. She chose the instrument for me. But she said I wanted it. I don't remember though. So I don't know [how I started]." According to Judy's mother, Judy joined group violin lessons at the beginning and later on switched to private lessons. After taking one-on-one lessons for several months, Judy went for the Music Talent Program audition. She was accepted and enrolled in the program when she was in Grade 3. Judy then started taking piano lessons because it was mandatory in the program.

Life in the Music Talent Program was fun for Judy. In addition to the regular academic courses, students in the Music Talent Program took music courses such as music theory, music history, aural skills and sight-reading, small and large ensembles, and private instrumental lessons. As music courses were added to the curriculum, regular academic courses were minimized. Judy, however, thought the standard of the academic

performance was as high as the performance expectations set for music courses: “School in Taiwan was tight, strict, and bound students more.... The academic pressure was heavy. Teachers emphasized academic performance more. It’s all about grades in Taiwan.... I liked the music courses better though.” Although Judy enjoyed learning in the Music Talent Program, she mentioned that she felt the children in the Music Talent Program were isolated:

We didn’t need to go to morning assemblies.... I felt that we were separated from other students of the regular classes. We did not have contact with students outside of music program. And the other students didn’t like us very much. They thought we were a group of arrogant and rich kids. The hardware in the music building was always the best, and the regular class students envied us by calling us “rich people.” [I did not feel the difference when I was younger.] But now I realize that I only knew people from the music building. All my friends were from the Music Talent Program. There was no channel for us to meet other people outside.

Judy came to Canada in 1998 when she was in Grade 5. She led a regular school life like any other student. She feels that Canadian schools give students more freedom to explore what they are learning:

School here is relaxing. It’s not just about tests and studying.... I learned more in school here. I felt that the stuff that schools were teaching could really be implemented in real life. [I am learning about how to deal with life rather than just memorizing what’s in the book.] This applies to all the subjects that I was learning.

As no more specialized musical training was offered in school, Judy maintained her music study by relying on private music lessons.

Currently, Judy is taking violin lesson with Miss Lee, a teacher from mainland China. She is also taking piano lessons from Patricia as well as private theory lessons with Frank. Interestingly, Judy prefers violin over piano. “Too many people play piano. Violin is more unusual, I think.” Judy listens to all kinds of music in her free time. She especially likes contemporary classical, hip hop, and popular music.

Being a focused music student for so long, Judy has established consistent practice habits. She practices violin for about two hours a day and piano for an hour. Nevertheless,

Judy doesn't think practice time matters that much:

My violin teacher doesn't care how much time I spend practicing. I think it depends on whether I put my heart into it when I practice. The quality of practice is far more important than the time spent. You just need to practice with the right strategies to reach the desirable outcome. If not, you are just wasting time. My piano teacher, on the other hand, wants me to spend more time because my piano repertoire is getting big. Sometimes I can't cover everything within an hour.

Like most children, Judy did not like practicing when she was younger: "My mom forced me to practice because she thought this could be a life skill that I could depend on....

When I was younger, I had to practice every day after school while other children were playing. It was hard for me." However, as Judy grew older, practicing had become a habit and an interest for her.

It seems that Judy's career goal had been set ever since she was accepted into the Music Talent Program. As Judy claimed, "it was the environment that led me down this road. I didn't like music when I was younger because I was pushed to do it. I think I am used to this life and I have no other choice. Although my mom is the one who pushed me into this field, I guess I accepted her arrangement willingly." Judy believed that learning music has helped her in many ways, developing persistence and endurance. Music learning has also helped her to feel and see things from different angles. Furthermore, music is a way of relaxing. Judy wants to be a violin teacher when her schooling is completed.

After graduating from high school, Judy was accepted into the Faculty of Music at the University of British Columbia and the University of Victoria. However, she decided to pursue her music studies in Germany in 2006.



### **The Music Lessons**

The Yang's house is situated in a quiet neighborhood in central Burnaby. I arrived at Judy's place 10 minutes prior to the scheduled lesson. Mrs. Yang was not home, but Judy opened the door for me. While leading me to where she has her theory lessons, Judy told me that Frank had called and was going to be late. We walked into a small study room where I began setting up the video recording equipment.

The room was crowded, with a desk, two chairs, one for the student and one for the teacher, and a sofa bed. In addition to a computer, there were a few books scattered on the desk. This desk was the focus of Judy and Frank's theory lessons. Other tools used during the lessons included the textbook for the RCM Grade 4 Harmony, notes for RCM Grade 3 History, a pen for marking, a pencil, an eraser, and several used sheets of paper for responding to the questions. The computer on the desk also served as an audio player for the required music listening for the history lessons.

I set the video recorder in a tiny space between the left side of the desk and one end of the sofa bed and I adjusted the camera angle to have a clear view of the actions and facial expressions of both teacher and student. Just as I finished setting up, Frank arrived. After showing Frank and Judy how to turn the video camera on and off, I retreated from the study room. I went back to my car and waited in the car for the next hour. Meanwhile, Frank and Judy began their lesson.

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Frank has been teaching both French horn and music theory since he came to Canada in 2002. Instead of teaching at his studio, Frank travels to and teaches at students' homes. Most of Frank's students are from the Taiwanese Canadian community. As French horn is not a very popular instrument among Taiwanese Canadians, the majority of

Frank's students study music theory with Frank. I have mentioned in previous stories that many private piano teachers include theory rudiments in their lessons. Frank, however, prepares students specifically for the theory requirements of the RCM examinations. He had no French horn students at the time of this research.

All students of the RCM curriculum must take mandatory theory examinations when they have reached grade five on their instruments. There are seven levels in theory: Preliminary rudiments (required for Grade 5 practical); Grade 1 rudiments (required for Grade 7 practical); Grade 2 rudiments (required for Grade 8 practical); Grade 3 harmony/keyboard harmony and Grade 3 history (required for Grade 9 practical); Grade 4 harmony, history, and counterpoint (required for Grade 10 practical); Grade 5 harmony, history, and analysis (required for ARCT practical for instruments). In addition, there is also an ARCT (Associate of Royal Conservatory of Music) in composition and theory (Royal Conservatory of Music, 2009). As most private music teachers cover rudiments in their lessons, Frank specializes in teaching RCM theory from Grade 3 and beyond but he also teaches rudimentary theory upon request.

Frank's private music lessons involve weekly lessons and examinations. In addition to the one-on-one lessons for theory and French horn, Frank also offers group lessons for up to five people. As Frank teaches at students' homes, he is not really concerned about the logistics of where he teaches:

They always find a place. I often have no objection [to where I teach] because I lecture most of the time. I expect to have a CD or DVD player to play music examples for students when I teach history.... I am fine with just a quiet place with a desk and some chairs.

Frank's requirements of a teaching space for French horn are also minimal. He asks for "a large room, chairs to sit on, and a music stand." In addition to the hardware that students' parents provide, Frank brings supplementary materials such as CDs or DVDs to play for

history students. He also carries his own French horn when giving French horn lessons and plays it to demonstrate and accompany his students.

Taking examinations plays a significant role in Frank's private music lessons. While the French horn students have a choice about whether to take an examination or not, taking examinations seems to be Frank's ultimate goal for theory lessons:

The RCM theory examinations are scheduled every December, May, and August. Once students decide that they want to take the next examination, they call me three or four months prior to the examination... They need 15 hours of preparation for harmony examinations...20 hours for history examinations.

Frank plans his theory lessons accordingly and selects the teaching materials following the guidelines of the RCM theory syllabus.

Most of Frank's teaching materials are the recommended textbooks from the RCM theory syllabus. He uses *The Elementary Music Rudiments* (Sarnecki, 2001) for basic theory, *Harmony: A Practical Approach* (Mackin, 1996), and *The Enjoyment of Music* (Machlis & Forney, 2008) for music history. He chooses textbooks according to the content of the book and ease of use:

I like Barbara Mackin because she is straight to the point. And [the content of her book] is up to date.... Basically, I choose these books because they fit into [my lesson plans and teaching schedule]. If I can spend 15 hours to cover the examination requirements, why use a thicker book which takes forever to teach? [*The Enjoyment of music*] covers the RCM requirements. The [format of the book] is best for answering the RCM questions. And of course, I always seek more suitable teaching materials when changes are made in the RCM [syllabus].

Besides the recommended textbooks, Frank also uses the notes he has accumulated throughout his own music studies over the years: "I have made notes from *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and my previous history textbooks. I add them to my lessons," Frank explains.

Interestingly, Frank usually answered me in a somewhat flippant and ironic manner when I first asked him a question; then he became serious after the first one or two sentences. For example, he told me about how he picked materials for his French horn

students:

Oh! I just pick whatever.... They are mostly beginners. I choose the materials according to their interests. I get a brief idea of [the kind of music] the child will like after first lesson. Then I find the materials that best suit their interests. Or I check out what is available for beginners in the music store and look for the appropriate materials.

Frank's lesson plans for music theory are closely related to the materials he selects for teaching: "The 17 chapters of Barbara Mackin's harmony textbook are already organized well. The first five chapters are easy. I usually spend one hour to cover these chapters." Frank quickly runs through these chapters with this purpose: "I want to see how students react. If they are able to take in and understand the information at my speed, I continue. If not, I slow down." I wondered if he had students who pretended that they understood and how Frank ascertained that these students really understood the information he provided before he continued with his lessons. Frank said:

"There aren't cases of pretending to understand. I know if they understand or not after giving them two written exercises to do without referencing the textbook.... I know the level of students' abilities after the first two or three lessons. Do they need more time in order to pass examination? Or do they need less time than I first planned. [Then we adjust] the lesson hours."

Frank claims that he makes no lesson plans for his French horn lessons: "We just do the basic exercises. Generally, the children here [in Canada] are not so serious [about learning instruments]. I don't expect them to continue playing for long, so we basically have fun in our lessons." Frank's words set me thinking. Because of his joking tone when he spoke, I had trouble identifying when he was joking or when he was serious during the interviews. I was afraid that Frank would find me critical of him if I asked further probing questions so I did not pursue the matter during the two official interviews. As Frank was the only male participant in the research and I happen to be a female researcher, it is also possible that my fear of asking Frank questions was simply because I was not comfortable speaking with an unfamiliar man. It is not until later when I got to

know Frank better that I was able to ask Frank more questions during our unofficial conversations. Nevertheless, I can only conclude that Frank is not as serious a French horn teacher as he is a theory teacher. Could this attitude be because Frank believes that the theory lessons are more important and worthy of effort because they prepare for examinations while the French horn students are only studying the instrument for fun and this attitude insults his love of the instrument? Contemporary children have many opportunities to explore all kind of musical instruments in school both in Taiwan and Canada as extracurricular activities. However, in Frank's and my generation, studying music was a big investment for parents. Therefore, our parents expected results — such as making music a career either as a music teacher or a performer. As Frank's sister was from the Music Talent Program, studying music to Frank must have meant serious business. I know that he overcame many obstacles and faced a lot of pressure when trying to study French horn after he came to North America. Yet it seems that he can't get enough long term French horn students to support his family. As I mentioned previously, French horn is not as popular an instrument as piano or violin among the Taiwanese Canadian community. Although more students from mainstream society are playing French horn, they are “not serious enough” according to Frank. There were times that I got a sense of sadness and anger in Frank. It was almost as if he had given up his French horn and become a theory teacher for practical reasons — making more money. After all, he mentioned that he would prefer to have more French horn students because he loves the playing and interaction with students when musicing. When I asked Frank why he did not seek more French horn students in the main stream society, he said:

They usually call and ask for lessons because they are taking the instrument at school. They stop coming after couple of lessons. Since they are only learning it for fun, I tend to teach in a relaxed way. It is only when I see someone who is serious about learning music that I become serious. But that is a rare case.

Frank's attitude towards teaching changes according to students' learning goals. However, teachers play a prominent role in promoting student motivation (Hallam, 2002). The teacher-student interaction is a reciprocal interaction. That Frank's students' are "not serious" might be a result of Frank's own attitude. It is also possible that students become serious about learning when they feel that their teacher is serious about their teaching.

With the above thoughts in mind, I asked Frank what he thinks is the purpose of music education: "I think music education is far more important than teaching language. Music can express things that language cannot express. The purpose of music education is to [help] people understand and enjoy the language of music." Interestingly, Frank thinks that music education as it is practiced in North America does not live up to his expectations: "Music education here lets students make noise on instruments. They get disciplined a little bit [through music training]. However, will they really understand music and furthermore feel and enjoy music? I don't really think so." On the other hand, music education in Taiwan emphasized training a specific group of students to become professional musicians:

[The purpose of music education in Taiwan] is so one can make money from [being a musician]. Therefore [music educators] push students to practice to reach the maximum level. However, are these students able to think musically or do they ever think about the value of music? Not all of them can do that. I don't think so.

In other words, Frank seems to think that the general music education in elementary and secondary schools in North America and Taiwan exists at a surface level while the Taiwanese private music education aims at perfecting performance techniques instead of teaching students to be musical. It is true that during Frank's time, general music education in Taiwan was ignored because the school emphasized academic subjects due to the pressure of the national high school and university entrance examinations (Tsai, 2006). Given that Frank never went through school music education in North America,

his words about music education in North America may be reflecting the attitudes of his students. He holds extreme views about music education in both North America and Taiwan. According to him, neither have been successful at developing students' musicality; this music education, in his view, does not encourage students to understand the true value of music and enjoy and appreciate music more deeply. I could not help but wonder where all these extreme opinions originated. Did they develop because he was foiled in his pursuit of a music degree when he was younger? Because he cannot use music to fully support his family financially in Canada as he expected? "*Huai Cai Bu Yu*" is a Chinese four-letter-sentence that describes a person who has talent but no opportunity to use it. People like that often turn their anger towards life into sarcastic views. Although Frank was subtle and humorous in his words, I strongly sensed his disappointment throughout our conversations.

As previously mentioned, preparing his students for RCM examinations is the only purpose of Frank's theory lessons. If it weren't for RCM examinations, Frank's job would not exist: "I don't think anyone would want to study music history, harmony, and counterpoint if it weren't for the RCM unless one wants to be a composer or a [professional musician]." The RCM system does not, however, affect Frank's French horn teaching as much as his theory lessons. Frank thinks the theory requirements of RCM examinations are difficult in general: "Music theory is necessary. But the level is too difficult. Why include counterpoint? Counterpoint is an elective for music majors in most universities. Why does the RCM make it mandatory?" Although most theory students take RCM examinations, Frank neither encourages nor discourages his students from taking examinations:

I talk to the students' parents about what they expect of their children. Different parents have different musical learning goals for their children. If the students are able to achieve their learning goals at the end, I don't care if they take RCM examinations or not. When a student tells me that he does not want to take RCM examinations, I think about what he wants to learn. If he wants to pursue music seriously, I still teach harmony but I recommend a more qualified teacher to help him with counterpoint. But if it's just for the purpose of the RCM examinations, I can help.

Frank's last comment implies the reason he criticizes counterpoint as a subject included in the RCM curriculum. He admitted in a later conversation that he is not good at counterpoint and feels insecure about teaching it. According to Frank, there is no "best time" for students to take theory examinations: "It depends on the ability of each individual student. It is also related to their playing level on instruments," he said. He gave an example:

I have a talented 12-year-old who will complete the RCM system before he turns 12. He has already performed with orchestras and won several competitions. Yet there are students who are in their twenties still struggling with their history examinations.... Some immigrant children have difficulty with history because of their poor language proficiency. They have a hard time writing essays.... Each student is different. I can't say when is the best time to take exams.

I could not help but think of my own RCM experience when Frank mentioned the difficulties new immigrant children experience learning music history. I started to study for the RCM Grade 10 violin and piano examinations not long after I first came to Canada. Besides the hours of practicing, I had to catch up on the theory co-requisites. Through referrals by friends, my mother found me a private theory teacher. Music rudiments were easy. I had already learned them in Taiwan in the Music Talent Program. The only difference was that I had to remember the terms and read the questions in English. Once I passed the Grade 2 Rudiments, my long journey of completing the theory co-requisites began. I had a hard time understanding the teacher during my lessons. I always had to look up vocabulary from the textbook. I had a lot of problems memorizing the facts and found it difficult to organize these facts and write them in understandable essays. My final solution was to write the history examination in point form. I passed the



examination yet I did not understand what I had written. All I did was memorize without understanding. The first history examination was a negative experience for me. I decided to finish all the practical examinations and complete the written examinations later. I did not complete the RCM theory co-requisites until I obtained my B. Mus. from UBC. After all these years, my English has improved. And with all the music electives I took at school, RCM examinations were no longer a threat to me. Because of my own experience, I pay more attention to ESL students when I give theory lessons. However, is it really necessary to push our students through all these difficult subjects instead of teaching them the joy and the beauty of the music? Understanding music harmony and history can help students have a better understanding of music, but studying these subjects intensively for examinations can have a negative impact on them. As teachers, how can we teach for understanding while still preparing for examinations? This is the dilemma that Frank and I have both faced.

Frank does not feel that he teaches the way he was taught. He did not take private theory lessons or RCM examinations when he was young so there is no comparison to be made. However, his French horn lessons are similar to his own earlier experiences in the way he organizes a lesson. The difference is that “my previous teachers did not emphasize long-note blowing exercises. The long-note exercise helps improve pitch and build a concept of notes. My teachers showed students the exercise but they didn’t do it during the lessons. I practice with students a lot during my lessons.”

With his busy teaching schedule and part time jobs, Frank has no time to attend professional developing workshops. He is not a member of any music teacher association. Frank finds books to read in his free time: “I read books such as *How to Affect a Person in Seven Steps*.” Nevertheless, Frank does not usually read books that relate to his music

teaching: “There are not many changes in theory and history over the years. I have already done enough research. I look up books on 20th century stuff when needed.” I further asked if he reads journal articles or books which reflect on how to teach. He answered:

I don’t read them. I know that these articles are available but I don’t need them. The relationship between my students and me is like...I need to do anything to make my students swallow all the information that I give them. The important thing is that they learn and understand. Most of the time I teach one-on-one or one-on-two; the interaction between students and me is critical. If I find a channel to build up our relationship in the first couple of lessons, then student learning will be effective. Maybe these journal articles would help me. But it might take a long time to find one article that interested me. I flip through the journals if I have a chance, but I wouldn’t subscribe because I am not teaching in the school system.

Frank’s words clearly portray a Transmission teaching perspective. According to Dan Pratt and Associates (1998), teachers with a transmission perspective believe that effective teaching involves accurately and efficiently passing content to the students. Frank is concerned about content, not pedagogy. I was not surprised to find out that Frank espouses a transmissional pedagogy because that was the way he was taught when he was a student (even though he did not recognize this similarity). Unlike Patricia and Lily who had been involved in the Music Talent Program in Taiwan since early on, experiencing an Apprenticeship teaching model (Pratt, 1998), or Lauren and Sally who received their high school education in Canada and engaged in a more constructivist approach to learning (Pratt, Kelly, & Wong, 1999), Frank was educated under what is called the “spoon-fed education” which is part of the traditional Chinese culture (Pratt et al.). Under the Confucian influence, teachers are the source of authority. Chinese students are accustomed to respect those who provide knowledge and to avoid challenging their teachers (Chan, 1999). Pratt et al. further explain:

The primary responsibility of teachers is to take students systematically through the subject, providing explanations and guidance that is high in structure and directed toward examination.... Thus, effective Chinese teachers are expected to adapt to their audience, guiding them step-by-step through the content. (p. 253)

Awareness of these cultural beliefs helps explain some of Frank's behaviors and thinking.

Although Frank talks in a worry free tone, he still faces difficulties in teaching, like every other teacher. He finds that motivating students is the most difficult challenge: "How to inspire them to think the subject is interesting [is difficult]. If they think the subject is fun, then they will learn the subject more quickly." Frank feels least successful when students do not do their homework: "I know that they won't pass the examination when they are not willing to write their homework. When that happens, I warn the parents. I tell them that I can't guarantee that their children will pass the examination this time. I protect myself this way." Unlike instrumental private lessons which tend to span years, Frank's private theory lessons are built around short term sessions. When students do not pass the coming examination, Frank usually does not hear from the parents and the students again: "When their children do not write their homework and do not pass the examination, parents do not call me again. I don't know if the students take the same examination again because I never hear from them. And I don't care about it once I am out of contact with them."

Every teacher has great moments too. Frank feels successful when his students obtain high marks on examinations: "I have a Grade 3 history student who scored 97 out of 100 in her examination. This student studied every hard. All I did was show her how to study." In addition to the success he feels when his students achieve high marks, Frank claims he learned how to be with children from his teaching: "I know how to deal with young kids. That is what I have gained from my job besides money."

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Frank and Judy were preparing for the Grade 3 history and Grade 4 harmony examinations for the first two lessons I observed in late April and early May. The RCM

written theory examinations were held in mid May following the first two lessons. There was a four-week break from Frank's lessons after the theory examinations because Judy was preparing for her RCM Grade 10 piano examination the coming June. Frank and Judy's theory lessons resumed in July. I recorded two more lessons in the summer. This time Judy was studying for the Grade 4 counterpoint examination.

Due to his busy schedule, Frank often changed his lesson time at the last minute during my observation period. He would call to tell me that he was not able to come while I was already setting up the equipment at Judy's house. The sudden schedule changes caused me some inconvenience. I had other participants to observe and my own teaching to fulfill. Sometimes Frank's rescheduling conflicted with other lessons, and it was difficult for me to switch my schedule. Therefore, I located another set of video recording equipment, left it at her house, and taught Judy how to set it up when I couldn't record the lessons. The last two lessons were recorded in this manner. The down side of this convenience was that although I had explained to Judy where the recording equipment should be placed, the request was not followed because there was a guest was living in the study room during the last two lessons. Whereas I always tried to aim for a clear view of the face, the body, and the actions of student and teacher, in the last two lessons, I could only see two people sitting with their backs towards the camera. I could still see what they were doing and hear their words, but the facial expressions were unavailable for the last two lessons.

Unlike instrumental private lessons, which consist of performing for the majority of the lesson time, Frank's theory lessons involved mainly writing. Besides the recommended textbooks from the RCM theory syllabus, the RCM has published supplementary materials such as series of student exercise books and examination papers

from past years for students to better prepare for all theory components. The lessons were organized around these materials.

Judy was writing examination papers for the first two lessons. Frank usually started the lessons by correcting the homework from the previous week: “I do not spend more than 20 minutes marking the written exercises. If she does all the questions I assigned, I select the questions [that required longer/detailed answers]. I can see where her problems are by marking these questions.” When Judy had no time to complete her homework on her own, Frank and Judy spent time working together during the lessons. I noticed that Judy kept referring to an answer key when she was writing. It turns out that Frank himself writes the examination papers each year a new examination booklet is published:

I write the answers when the examination papers first come out. I have many students who are doing the same examination. It would take me forever to mark the papers if I had to think about the answers on the spot. So I spend two hours writing down the answers at home and then refer to the answer key when I am marking. It is more effective this way. And the students are able to see their mistakes right away.

While Judy was writing, Frank surfed on the internet. Judy would ask Frank questions when she encountered problems in her writing. For example, she asked questions such as “Can you please explain all the musical forms again?” and “Can you tell me again about sonata cycle?” Frank then explained all the different musical forms and at the same time wrote down the points that he talked about and made notes for Judy on a piece of paper. Frank’s role in these two lessons was reactive. He provided answers only when Judy asked. When Judy needed music examples for her history papers, Frank often sang or whistled the music fragments. There were also occasions that Frank looked for music examples on the internet.

Interestingly, Frank and Judy chatted like two friends working on their homework after school in the first two lessons. Judy was not fully concentrating on her test paper

writing. She drifted away from her test papers and chatted with Frank all the time. Frank interrupted Judy's writing when he located something he found interesting on the internet, usually about concerts that he had attended, a story of a famous orchestra conductor, a Stradivari violin of a music prodigy, or conversations about someone they both know from the Vancouver Youth Symphony Orchestra. Because Judy is already determined to become a professional musician, she is interested in knowing more about the world of professional musicians. Frank tries to tell her as much as possible about the lives of musicians:

A computer is available where we have lessons. I can find answers directly when she has questions related to music. I tell her about [the concerts and the musicians] because I want her to know that music or things that involve music do not only exist on the pages of textbooks. It is happening around us.

However, as Judy alternated between chatting and writing her examination papers, it is hard to tell how effective the learning in this lesson format was. I later asked Judy what she thought about the first two lessons after she had passed both her Grade 3 History and Grade 4 Harmony examinations. She explained that the first two lessons I had observed were prior to the examinations. Frank had covered all the necessary materials in previous lessons. Frank usually gave her practice examinations to write. When she did not complete the practice examination papers on time, Frank would write it with her. "So whenever I have questions, I can ask him." Judy said. I was curious about whether she found it disturbing that Frank chatted with her during her writing. She answered: "No! I get bored easily with this stuff. The chatting kept me awake. And because I am interested in taking music as a profession, I like to hear Mr. Ho talking about the reality of being a musician."

Frank's role switched from a study partner back to a teacher in the third and fourth lessons, which focused on counterpoint — helping Judy compose music using

contrapuntal techniques. Frank explained the forms that applied to contrapuntal writing, such as Inventions and Fugues, to Judy. They looked at music examples from the textbook together and talked about the various techniques applied in these examples. After 30 minutes of lecturing, Frank selected exercises for Judy to write using the techniques he explained. Frank believes that the best way to learn is through hands-on experience. Before he made Judy write, he demonstrated the concepts he explained by doing one exercise. Judy was able to see the whole process of constructing a melody or a chord progression from Frank's writing: "I explain the concepts, demonstrate the writing, and let her try. I make sure she understands [the concepts]. Then I assign work for her to do at home."

Teacher modeling was present throughout the lessons. Besides writing demonstrations, Frank used different forms of singing in the lessons, a practice noted by Rose and Buell (1998). Frank whistled or hummed tunes when Judy asked him to give a music example from a particular historical period. He sang the excerpts from the textbook before explaining the composition techniques. Furthermore, he whistled the melodies that Judy and he composed. Frank later told me about the importance of singing in his lessons:

I don't know how to play piano. But I think it's important for Judy to know the melodies as much as possible because she wants to take music for career. When I see a fragment from the textbooks or a name of a piece and I happen to know it, I sing for Judy so she will have an idea of what those pieces are.

Although there was no instrumental performance in the first three lessons, piano was used during the last lesson. In the second half of the fourth lesson, Judy composed a two-part phrase using a suspension. After Judy completed the melody, they moved to the piano room upstairs along with the recording equipment. The two then worked on the counterpoint for the left hand with the aid of the piano. Instead of letting Judy work on

her own, Frank guided her through building the chord progressions. Judy tried the notes on the piano each time they wrote something new. According to Frank, the final goal of composing a piece of music is to make the music sound enjoyable. The piano helped verify that the music they composed was pleasant to the ear:

Although we have to follow the rules when writing a counterpoint piece, the main thing is to make the music listenable. Therefore we have to verify that [with piano]. People who have good ears can hear the melody and the parts internally. But I am not like that. Therefore, I need to hear the actual music from piano playing. Then I know what is wrong with the chords and the structure.... Since I have little training in keyboard, I often ask students to play what they write.

No physical punishments or rewards were evident during the four lessons. “It is unnecessary. Passing the examination is the reward my students get,” Frank said.

Mrs. Yang did not appear throughout the entire four lessons, as might be expected with a more mature student. Except for the two interviews when I talked to Mrs. Yang in person, I rarely saw her when I went to her home. It was always Judy who greeted me and showed me into the house. The only time Mrs. Yang appeared on camera occurred when she brought in drinks for Frank and Judy during one lesson. As Frank described, most of his students’ parents are not present during lessons. “They get bored of the lesson content,” he said jokingly. Although Frank does not mind having parents observe lessons, he does not encourage it: “The efficient way to learn [an instrument/music] is to learn it in a relaxed environment. The parents’ presence doesn’t necessarily help students relax. I do not encourage anything that could result in inefficient learning.” This statement corresponds with Macmillan (2004)’s discovery of teachers’ ambivalent attitudes towards parental involvement.

The relationship between Frank and his students’ parents is positive: “My students’ parents respect me. They all do,” Frank claimed. He communicates with his students’ parents both in person and through phone calls. He mostly talks to parents regarding his



concerns about students' progress: "I also chat with them when we are both in the mood," Frank said. To avoid a negative impact on student motivation and learning, Frank does not speak critically to students' parents when the students are present: "I talk to them separately when I am talking about negative things. I don't want to affect students' learning attitude [by ruining their pride.] I encourage students in front of their parents though."

Frank's expectations for students are simple. He expects them to pass the examinations. However, he has an ideal standard for his students: "I want them to score 80% for Harmony Three and 70% for Harmony Four. I am pleased if they score 60% for Counterpoint four.... And if they study hard, they should be able to get 80% for History in all grades." His expectations for students' parents are also uncomplicated. "Pay On Time!" Frank answered bluntly when I asked him what he expects from parents. Frank believes that his students' parents expect him to "help their children pass the examination." These expectations correspond with the previous statement that the purpose of having the private theory lessons is to prepare for the RCM examinations.

Although Mrs. Yang seemed to be less active in Judy's lessons, she was involved in Judy's private music lessons in other ways: "I pay for her [now that she is older]. But I used to sit in the lessons when she was younger and drove her back and forth between lessons. I nagged when she did not perform satisfactorily in her lesson." As Mrs. Yang was the one who wanted Judy to study music as a career, I wondered about Mr. Yang's involvement in Judy's musical learning. Here is Mrs. Yang's reply:

I make most of the decisions [about children's education]. He sometimes complains and doubts that it is necessary to spend so much money and effort [to study music] given that our daughter does not seem to be really talented. But I am a very stubborn person. If I insist on something, she respects my wishes. She complains at times but does not contradict my decisions.

Unlike many Taiwanese Canadian parents who place great importance on taking

examinations, Mrs. Yang does not think examinations are necessary:

She is taking the examinations now. Before, I did not agree for her to take examinations. [She is going to study music in the university.] What is the use of these grades? Maybe her teachers think it is necessary for her to work towards a goal. I personally don't care about her taking the examinations.

Having already talked with four parents, I attempted to predict future responses. Mrs. Yang always surprised me with her interesting views. For example, I wanted to know what she thought was most difficult about private music lessons. I expected her to tell me that making children practice or motivating them was difficult. However, Mrs. Yang thought that finding a good private music teacher was the most difficult part. Her definition of a good teacher is someone who “brings [her child] into the realm of music.” I further inquired about what she meant by “the realm of music.” She explained: “It is about showing students ways of appreciating music. What does this piece represent? What does the composer want people to feel from this piece? And how does one enjoy and appreciate this music? It is about knowledge related to [the above questions].” Even though Judy has been studying music for several years, Mrs. Yang has not found an ideal teacher:

I read about great music teachers in magazines and newspapers. They do not only teach students playing technique but also bring students into the realm of music. I have not yet met teachers who expend some effort to show my daughter the world of music. Maybe it is because my child is not a music prodigy that no teacher wants to teach her with full heart.

Apparently, Judy sees things differently from her mother. As the one most involved in private music learning, Judy feels that she has learned different things from each of her teachers:

I learned about playing techniques and how to interpret music from my violin teacher. My violin teacher emphasizes more how you sing or express music.... She is a great performer. And she can truly feel the music. I want to learn this ability [of music interpretation] from her. I think she is the only one who really taught me how to play music.... My theory teacher talks to me about [life of a music major] in university. He provides information related to music and offers his opinions to me.... My piano teacher is nice. I do not talk to her in depth though. We do not have much time to chat during the lessons because I only have 45 minutes.

Judy has a negative view about taking music theory lessons. “The subjects are complicated,” Judy said. The intensive study of music harmony and history has added pressure to Judy’s busy high school schedule. She takes theory lessons because she wants to obtain the certificates from Royal Conservatory of Music. If it weren’t for the examination, she would not study theory intensively: “I think it is necessary to study music theory. It is for my own benefit. But I would not have lessons every week like I am doing now.” Judy’s view towards taking examinations is also negative:

I am taking RCM examinations. I do not know why. I don’t think the examination can test your real ability. The standards are too low [everyone passes when they achieve 60%.] And the system is complex. You need to fulfill theory co-requirements in order to obtain the certificate. Therefore I don’t like the system personally.

Although both Judy and Mrs. Yang are not fans of examinations, Judy still takes examination because it is something her teachers want her to experience.

Among all the difficulties Judy has encountered in her musical learning, she finds music interpretation the most difficult: “It is something that you need to think, experience, and feel on your own. No one can help you with that. And a lot of times I try very hard but I still don’t get.” As a result, Judy is delighted when she has a breakthrough after thinking about how to interpret a piece of music for a long time without her teacher’s help. Nothing really upset Judy in her private music lessons. “I feel sorry if I do not prepare well for the lessons, but I don’t get upset,” Judy explained.

Judy does not know exactly what her private music teachers expect of her. “Learn and play the instruments well?” she guesses. Although Mrs. Yang has wanted Judy to be a musician from the very beginning, Judy does not feel the pressure: “I don’t think my parents expect me to be very professional. They want me to develop a skill that I can rely on later in my life.” In conclusion, Judy loves her private music lessons. The lessons provide her with knowledge about music and foster patience and persistence.

Furthermore, she feels relaxed when she is having private music lessons.

Judy is now studying music in Germany. We have become MSN pals since the interviews. She asks questions and I share my experiences with her. She is eager to become a musician and works very hard to attain her goal. Frank is teaching increasingly fewer students ever since he got a full time job. Mrs. Yang still has a young son to take care of now that Judy is off to college.

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This private music teaching and learning story is about confidence. Frank was a confident teacher who has no doubts about what he teaches and how he teaches it. Judy was enthusiastic and dauntless about becoming a professional musician. Furthermore, Mrs. Yang was determined to have Judy walking on the career path she purposefully laid for Judy. Here we have our fourth teaching triad, formed by a confident teacher, a persistent young musician, and a progressive mother.

## Chapter Nine: A Problem Solver

*“I am a serious teacher. I wish to solve my students’ problems to the best of my ability. I want to find the answers to help them.”*

### Patricia

A little boy appeared at the door after I rang Patricia’s door bell, and a little girl peeked around her brother’s back. Patricia stood right behind them smiling and asking them to greet me with my proper name. These two children were Patricia’s five-year-old son and three-year-old daughter; they went for a walk with their grandparents, leaving us a quiet place to talk. It was the first time I had met Patricia. Previously, we had only talked on the phone. Like her husband, Frank, I had found Patricia from a list of private music teachers provided by the Taiwanese Canadian Cultural Society. She had not been at home when I delivered my Letter of Information. After reading the letter, Patricia agreed to participate in my study, and we subsequently set up an interview appointment over the phone.

Patricia is a tall lady in her late thirties who speaks with a soft and gentle voice. She led me into her living room where cookies and tea were already laid out on a coffee table. After I set up my mini disk recorder, we started talking.

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Patricia was born and raised in Taiwan. She lived with her parents and two younger brothers in Taipei. Her father was the owner of a small trading company. After giving birth to her third child, Patricia’s mother quit her banking job to become a housewife. Like in many traditional Taiwanese families, Patricia’s father concentrated on earning a living while Patricia’s mother took care of everything related to their children’s

upbringing.

Neither of Patricia's parents plays instruments. Although Patricia's father enjoys singing in his free time, it was Patricia's mother who opened the door to music for

Patricia:

My mother loved listening to classical music such as opera and symphonic music. They only had the deck record player back then. The machine was expensive. My mom saved her salary to buy a record player and many classical music records.... I was probably listening to classical music when I was still inside her. I listened to classical music when I was a baby. [When I got older,] my mom listened to the records with me and described the pieces to me.

Besides listening to and talking about music with her daughter, Patricia's mother was also keen on giving her daughter proper musical training. Patricia was sent to a Yamaha music program (group keyboard lessons) at age 4: "I never asked why my mom sent me to these lessons. I think it's because she wanted me to have a life skill that I could depend on when necessary. It's always good to be exposed to music as a child." As Patricia was an obedient child, she followed her mother's will and did what she was told: "I practiced obediently when my Mom told me to. I was a very good child." On the contrary, Patricia's two brothers did not listen to their mother as she did: "They were also sent to the Yamaha music program. But they never liked practicing. They had no patience. So my mother did not persist [in making my brothers take music lessons]." Patricia continued through all the levels with the Yamaha method until she graduated from the program in Grade 5. Meanwhile, she had also started taking private piano lessons.

Patricia's mother wanted to provide a full musical experience for her daughter. Besides taking private piano lessons and the Yamaha music program, Patricia was sent to participate in the Rong Xing children's choir: "I was really young at that time. It must have been the same time that I started taking Yamaha. I think my Mom wanted me to join the choir for ear training as well as nurturing my musical sense." The Rong Xing

children's choir was a well known children's choir in Taipei. Children had to go through auditions in order to get in. However, Patricia did not stay in the choir for long because she lived too far from the choir's rehearsal location.

Although Patricia did not need to be pushed to practice, her mother did her best to accompany her in the lessons and group classes: "My mother supported me by doing her best to be with me. And if it was within her [musical] ability range, she would practice with me.... My father, on the other hand, supported me only financially. He was too busy to have time with me."

When it was time for school, Patricia went to Zhong Shan elementary school in her district for the first two years. She was enrolled in the Intelligence Class in the second semester of her Grade 1 year: "Subjects offered in the Intelligence Class were different from those offered in normal classes. We had more classes with scientific experiments, and there were many [situations] when we needed to develop our own stuff. For example, we needed to design the dance steps and compose music in the music class." Nevertheless, Patricia only spent one and a half years in the Intelligence Class. Then, she was accepted into the Music Talent Program in Grade 3 and was transferred to Fu Xing elementary school.

Patricia spent her next 10 years of school life in the Music Talent Program. She did not remember why her mother sent her to audition for the program: "I think she wanted me to have ability. And the government paid for you to study music when you were in the program. She just wanted me to give it a try I guess." Patricia auditioned with piano as her major instrument. Once she was in the Music Talent Program, it was mandatory to have a minor instrument. Patricia chose violin and started taking violin lessons in the second semester of Grade 3.

Life in the Music Talent Program was busy for Patricia. Besides the regular academic courses, music subjects were added into the curriculum. Students in the program took music theory, aural skills and sight-reading, music history, small and large ensembles, and private music lessons: “The music courses took a lot of our time. We had fewer PE classes. We also spent a lot time on rehearsals for competitions.” The members in the Music Talent Program were school representatives for various music competitions such as choir, orchestra, and rhythm band (percussion instruments and mouth organs). They rehearsed during the large ensemble class, in the morning, and after school. It seemed that students in the Music Talent Program spent more time in music activities than in regular school activities.

After graduating from the elementary school, Patricia went through another audition and was accepted into the junior high school Music Talent Program. The school life in the Junior High program was similar to that in the elementary program except that more music and academic courses were added. Students were required to learn a Chinese instrument and join the Chinese ensemble. More school concerts were held; more solo performance opportunities were provided for students. Recitals and jury were held each semester. Each student performed in front of other students. Junior high school was the period when Patricia became committed to musical learning: “I had only been doing what I was told when I was younger.... I started practicing voluntarily when I was in Grade 8. Maybe it was the peer pressure.... All my friends were doing the same thing.... There was this positive competitive feeling among us. We practiced together.”

Once again, Patricia had to audition for the senior high school Music Talent Program. More specific music courses such as music analysis and form were offered in senior high school. After three years in the senior high school, Patricia went through yet another



examination/audition and was accepted into the School of Music of the National Taiwan Normal University, which had the best music faculty at that time.

Patricia's career path had narrowed ever since she entered the Music Talent Program:

"It had been one straight line for me. I didn't think too much about other possibilities.

Everyone around me was working towards the same goal." However, Patricia felt that they were separated when they were in the Music Talent Program:

We had so many music courses we did not have as much time for the academic courses as the regular students. We were rarely involved in school sports or large events. There was no morning assembly for us because we were usually in rehearsals. No swimming lessons for us. We never had art class or craft class. We lived in [our own world]. We were different from the other students. We just did not fit in with the others. They didn't understand the things we were doing.

If she could go back, Patricia probably would not have gone into the Music Talent

Program: "I would probably have gone into the performance or creative arts but not

necessarily in music.... I did not learn to be creative in the Music Talent Program. Once you were in the program, you had nowhere else to go. I wouldn't have narrowed [my career path] at a young age if a choice had been given to me in the beginning."

The four years in National Taiwan Normal University brought Patricia further into the study of music. Chinese music history and harmony were added to the music courses continuing from high school: "Although we studied Chinese music history and participated in Chinese ensemble, the university curriculum was based on Western music. Most teachers had obtained their degrees in Western schools. Western music was strongly emphasized in our learning." The most memorable experiences in Patricia's undergraduate life included:

We went to Salzburg for a music camp in the summer of the junior year. It might have been because our advisor had her training in Europe. She encouraged us to go to participate in music camps.... We were only 20 years old. We planned the trip all by ourselves from applying for the camp to booking the airfares. This experience increased our interest in studying music. [The other experience during the undergraduate years] was that we had a final graduation project in our senior year. Mine was to have a solo recital. It was a pivotal experience for me because I had

learned all [necessary procedures] for having a recital. The training I got from the undergraduate years was beneficial and helped [building a strong base for my later studies].

Among the private music teachers Patricia had in Taiwan, Patricia's piano instructor in the National Taiwan Normal University most influenced her attitudes towards music:

Lena Yeh was my piano instructor at the time. She just had just come back from Salzburg and was a young accomplished musician. She was often busy with her performance schedule. So her teaching schedule in the school was unstable.... But all of her students were afraid of her because she was strict. [Since her time spent with us was limited,] we would prepare our best in order to have a quality lesson. That's when I really believed that practicing was for me, not for anyone else.... She also helped us realize that we have to rely on ourselves in learning. We should be aggressive and responsible for our own learning. I remembered when we needed a reference letter from her for the summer camp, she would tell us to write it and she would read it and sign. She treated us like professional musicians. But other than that, she didn't help you unless you went to her and asked her specific questions. She made me realize that I was responsible for myself as an individual.

The National Taiwan Normal University was a government-owned institute where the government paid for students who attended. It was mandatory for students from this University to serve the country for a year after graduation. Patricia spent her one year teaching in Chuang Ching Vocational High school: "I taught class piano.... Most of music students from my school wanted to study abroad after graduating. It was our only goal. So we just wanted to get over this one year of required teaching." While still teaching in the high school, Patricia started to apply for her music studies abroad. When she was deciding where to go for more advanced studies, she consulted with her school elder sisters from National Taiwan Normal University who were already studying abroad. After looking into several schools, she chose The Ohio State University, to study with well known pianist Earl Wild: "Earl Wild performed in Taiwan once. He was a famous musician. He was old, born in 1915. Yet he is still alive and performing to this day. I chose The Ohio State University because of him." The other reason Patricia selected Ohio State was that living expenses were lower there than at most music schools on the West or East coast. Patricia spent two and half years at The Ohio State University.

Life in Ohio was simple. Patricia spent a lot of time in the practice rooms, as she had in Taiwan. The only social activity she undertook was going to concerts with friends. This was also where she met her future husband, Frank.

Two teachers had the most impact on Patricia during her Ohio period. The first was Earl Wild: “Our relationship was completely built on technique and music making. That is, we were purely teacher and student. He corrected my faults. I learned technique and [how to make better music] from him.” Earl Wild only taught Patricia for two years then he left for another school. For the last six months in Ohio, Patricia had another teacher: “This teacher was different. She also gave me music. But her attitude was different. She was not unapproachable. She supported me more [in real life]. For example, she cared more about your life. She talked to you about your future. She provided guidance.”

After receiving her master’s degree from The Ohio State University, Patricia went to the University of Cincinnati to get her doctoral degree in piano performance on a full time scholarship. The School of Music in Cincinnati was big compared to the one at The Ohio State University. Patricia started to meet people from different fields. It was here that she learned to do research and started to use libraries: “I was living in my own world before I went to Cincinnati. I concentrated on practicing only. I did not start to pay attention to other people until I was in Cincinnati.”

While Patricia was studying for her master and doctoral degrees, her family immigrated to Canada. As the immigration law at that time permitted permanent residents to study in the United States, Patricia got her Canadian citizenship after she graduated from Cincinnati. She got married after completing her long journey of schooling. She spent some time with her husband in Seattle and went back to Taiwan to teach in a university for a year. In 2002, she officially moved back to Canada, pregnant with her

second child.

Patricia became a full time private music teacher after she moved to Canada: “I teach to make a living. This is the only thing I can do, I guess. Although I like to perform, performing is not a reliable [career].” She first got students by putting ads in the newspaper. And students brought in more students through referrals. Interestingly, although Patricia did her graduate studies in North America, she still feels more comfortable teaching in Chinese: “I only put up the ads in the Chinese newspaper. I am more comfortable when teaching in my native language. I have not considered putting ads in other media sources.”

Even though Patricia comes from a performance background, she sees herself as a music teacher: “I have the ability to be a performer. But since I teach more, I see myself more as a music teacher.... I am a serious teacher. I wish to solve my students’ problems to the best of my ability. I want to find the answers to help them.” Patricia believes that the benefit of learning music is to provide people with easier access to music:

Because of my background, I never thought of why we study music until I started teaching and had my own children. Learning is good. Learning music is one of the many opportunities we have [in life]. It helps train children’s persistence and consistency.... If you have a music sense, you [have an easier access] to music.... To me, it’s a pity if a child cannot sing in tune or cannot get the rhythm.

Besides being a private music teacher, Patricia also accompanies choirs and solo instruments.

### **Mrs. Chen**

It was a sunny afternoon when I arrived at Mrs. Chen’s apartment in the West end of Vancouver. I had talked with Mrs. Chen on the phone prior to the interview. She agreed that it was best for me to interview her while Patricia’s first lesson was being videotaped. Mrs. Chen lives in a bachelor suite with her husband and daughter. The piano is located

in the living room/bedroom. There was no other place for us to talk while the piano lesson was in session so we decided to talk in the lobby of her apartment. It was a quiet lobby because most residents of the apartment enter the building from side doors. We had an hour of uninterrupted interview in the lobby as a result.

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Mrs. Chen is a kind woman in her mid forties. She was born and lived in Taipei, Taiwan. After graduating from Jing Mei senior girl's high school, she worked in a trading company for a while and then became a real estate agent. Her husband worked in a trading business. Their daughter, Natalie, was born in Taiwan. As she was their only daughter, the Chen couple wanted the best for their child: "I was older when I had Natalie.... We had friends who lived here in Vancouver. So we started to wonder if this would be a better environment for my child to live and be educated." The family moved to Canada when Natalie was in Grade 1. Both Mr. and Mrs. Chen are currently retired. They have been living in Vancouver for five years.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Chen had no musical training. Mrs. Chen likes to listen to classical music. As a Christian, she also enjoys singing and listening to religious music. Mr. Chen listens to whatever his wife selects. Because Mrs. Chen had no experience of playing music when she was a child, she doesn't want her child to grow without learning music: "Because I didn't have the music training myself, I hope that my daughter can grow up beautifully with proper etiquette and is able to play the piano well." Unlike many Taiwanese fathers who only take care of the money making for the household, Mr. Chen is highly active in educating his daughter: "My husband read articles about how starting music early will help children's brain development." With this idea in mind, Mrs. Chen started piano lessons for Natalie at age 4: "We had an electronic keyboard at home.

So I hired a teacher who came to my house. Then she switched to learn with a piano teacher from her kindergarten.” Natalie continued taking piano lessons after she came to Vancouver. Mrs. Chen found teachers through referrals by friends. As the family had no car, they went everywhere by bus. It was difficult for them to get to a teacher’s house if the distance was too great. Luckily, a friend recommended Patricia. Given that Patricia has a high educational level and would come to teach at their home, Mrs. Chen had found the right person for Natalie.

Although Natalie was in Grade 6 in school, she was playing Grade 10 Royal Conservatory Music repertoire. Mrs. Chen claimed that she did not spend too much time supervising when Natalie practiced: “I rarely sit beside Natalie when she practices. I just tell her to practice until time is up. Sometimes I sit around and read a book while she plays. A lot of times I do jobs around the house.” However, Mrs. Chen thought that Natalie desired her mother’s presence when she practiced: “I think I need to stay with her a lot because she gets bored. And she wants us to listen to her. She needs encouragement from us.” Despite the fact that Natalie was an advanced piano player, Mrs. Chen still needed to remind Natalie when it was time to practice: “She is getting better now. She sometimes plays voluntarily. But this does not happen often. I have to keep reminding her.” Mrs. Chen explained an interesting points-reward system that she uses with Natalie: “I tell her that she will get points if she plays for so long. Then later on she can exchange the points for a reward such as an hour with her friend in the park or a bar of chocolate.” Even though Natalie was already in Grade 6, this points-reward system was still working well between Natalie and her mother.

Mrs. Chen expects her daughter to have a rich life experience with a high quality of life: “I don’t want her job to be a busy and [draining] one. I don’t expect her to have a

low social status. I want her to have a high cultural level.” Mrs. Chen further described her dream job for Natalie: “I want her to be a scholar or a musician. These jobs belong to the aesthetic side. I want her to have a job that is with virtue and beauty.” In conclusion, Mrs. Chen thinks that learning music helps cultivate one’s personality: “I think music enriches people’s lives. It expands people’s lives. [The purpose for me to send my daughter to music lessons is so that] her life is enriched with [many possibilities].”

### **Natalie**

Natalie had just finished her weekly piano lesson when it was her turn for an interview. I had just ended the conversation with her mother in the lobby of their apartment and returned to their suite. When I walked in, Natalie was eating chocolate cake, and Patricia was chatting with Mrs. Chen. Mr. Chen kindly offered me a plate of chocolate cake and tea. Thanking him with a smile, I began to set up the recording device while waiting for Natalie to finish snacking. After Natalie had finished eating, we sat on a couch against the window and began to talk.

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Natalie is 12-year-old girl who describes herself as “energetic and sporty.” She is currently a Grade 6 student at Jamieson Elementary School. Natalie was born in Taiwan. She moved to Vancouver, British Columbia with her parents when she finished kindergarten. Natalie enjoys reading during her free time. Historic novel and adventure books are two of her favorites.

Natalie did not remember much about her kindergarten experience in Taiwan except that she was the youngest in her class and she used to take private music lessons from her kindergarten teachers. School experiences in Canada have been “fun” for Natalie: “It’s

easy. The projects [such as social studies, science projects, and music projects] are easy but [they take] a lot of time because the teacher expects a lot. The math and the academic stuff is pretty easy though.” Natalie likes the people in her school. She thinks that children here accept newcomers more than the children in Taiwan: “People here are kind and they are fun to play with.... If I go to a new school, the kids are really nice instead of treating me like a total stranger.” Natalie is aggressive in her academic studies. At the time, she was studying for the entrance examination for the challenge and transition program for advanced students: “I want to take these examinations because they keep wasting time in school. If I go to the transition program, it’s two years instead of five. They cut off all the partying and fun and do the [studying] instead.” Apparently, the current Grade 6 curriculum did not fulfill Natalie’s desire for learning. She decided to add more challenge to her life.

Natalie has been taking piano lessons for 7 years, since she was 4 years old. Although she was too young to remember why she started taking piano, her music learning experience in Taiwan was somewhat negative: “The teachers [of the kindergarten class] used a stick to hit us. If I played something wrong, they would hit me here [in the finger].... I was very young, and it hurt.... I got used to it [after a while] though.” According to Natalie, teachers here in Canada are “nice.” Natalie preferred a piano teacher who is “attentive, humorous, and friendly but with good skills.” She is currently studying Grade 10 Royal Conservatory of Music repertoire with Patricia.

Natalie likes listening to classical music. She also enjoys playing piano besides the practicing part: “I like to practice pieces, not technique. There is no passion [in technique]. It’s not as interesting as the pieces.” Although Natalie thinks her teacher expects her to practice two hours per day, she does not meet her teacher’s expectations:



“[I don’t play] too much. Sometimes I don’t practice. Sometimes I play for 10 to 30 minutes.” It is surprising to know that Natalie only practices half an hour per day, yet she is able to cover her Grade 10 repertoire: “I practice because there is not much else to do.... I guess I practice every day because I have to or else I will forget everything.” According to Natalie’s words, she practices to improve her playing skills and to get familiar with the music.

Natalie’s piano lessons were temporarily interrupted after the observation period because she needed more time to study for her examinations for entry into the advanced program. A few months after the interview, Natalie was accepted into the Transition Program at the University of British Columbia. After the examinations, her piano lessons resumed. Natalie passed her Grade 10 piano examination in August, 2006 and entered the Transition program in September, 2006.

### **The Music Lessons**

I parked my car outside an apartment near the Oakridge Mall, waiting for Patricia. We were supposed to walk to Mrs. Chen’s unit together. Patricia did not appear on time, but I had forgotten to bring her cell phone number so I could not contact her. I decided to proceed without her and meet her at the apartment. I buzzed. Mrs. Chen quickly unlocked the lobby door. I entered an old wooden building. Looking at the stained carpet in the dimly lit lobby, I could imagine its elegance many years ago. The Chen family lived on the second floor of the building. Slowly, I walked up the stairs and reached their door.

Mrs. Chen welcomed me into a bachelor suite with a small kitchen. The rectangular room served as a living room, study room, bedroom, and dining room. The first things I saw when I walked into the room were two connected queen size beds against one wall.

To the right of the beds was a sitting area that included one couch, a small table, two chairs, and two desks stacked with a computer, piles of books, and household items. A small TV was located on the floor under the desk. Shelves of books surrounded and decorated the room: “We love reading!” Natalie explained. The piano was located on the other side of room just next to the bed. This is where Natalie has her lessons. Although there were many objects in this one room, I did not feel crowded. And from the proud smiles of the Chen family, I could feel their love for their home.

As the piano was squeezed between the beds and the shelves, I did not have much choice regarding the location of my camera. The space to the right of the piano was reserved for Patricia’s chair. That left the left side for my tripod. From that angle, I could see Natalie and her hands clearly. But sometimes Natalie blocked Patricia. Patricia arrived shortly after I had set up the camera. En route from another student’s house, she had got caught up in the traffic. She had another student after Natalie, so she began teaching immediately.

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Patricia has close to 30 students ranging from four-year olds to university students. She currently teaches in her own home but she was traveling to students’ homes when I did my observations. Besides her full time job as a private music teacher, Patricia is also an active performer as soloist, accompanist, and chamber musician. She incorporates the experience of her performance activities such as playing in recitals, music festivals, and examinations into her private music lessons.

Her weekly private music lessons usually last one hour. Although Patricia teaches both beginners as well as advanced students, most of her students are late intermediate students or advanced students at the Grade 8 RCM piano level and beyond. She agrees

with Duke and Simmons (2006) that private music teachers tend to emphasize technical aspects more with beginners. However, she prefers teaching students at higher levels:

I prefer teaching students who are at higher levels. It is difficult to explain musical interpretation to young beginners; [I] have to emphasize technique more with them. It takes time for beginners to develop and invoke their musicality.... I don't need to pay as much attention to technique with advanced students. I can spend more time talking about music instead.

Patricia plans her lesson according to each student's progress. No specific lesson plans are written: "I have different requirements for different students. And I set different goals for each student for each lesson," Patricia explained.

Patricia uses a variety of teaching materials in her lessons. Like many piano teachers in Taiwan, she uses *The Virtuoso Pianist in 60 Exercises* (Hannon, 1876) when teaching technique to students at all levels. For young beginners, Patricia starts with the piano method books such as the *Piano Adventures* (Nancy & Randall Faber, 2000) and Thompson's (2005) *Modern Course for Piano*: "The pieces from John Thompson are well known, and the presentation design for Nancy Faber is interesting. I like the idea that it has the accompanying part to play duets." Once the beginners have gained more sight-reading skills and are more stabilized in getting the right rhythms, Patricia introduces the works of Ferdinand Beyer and Carl Czerny in her lessons. And of course, for those who wish to participate in RCM examinations, Patricia uses the assigned music materials from the RCM piano syllabus.

When I was a private piano student in Taiwan, the methods books and their order of introduction was very similar to what I observed Patricia using. I started with beginning materials such as method books by John Thompson (2005), David Carr Glover (1982), and James Bastien (1981). Then I began to play Hanon, Beyer, and Czerny. Minuets and inventions by J.S. Bach followed. A collection of *Sonatinen* and *sonatinas* (Zhang, n.d.) by various composers was gradually added into my lessons. After the two albums of

*Sonatinen* were completed, we moved forward to play a collection of *Sonaten* (Zhang, n.d.). When we piano students from the Music Talent Program were asked about our piano levels, instead of saying “I am in Grade 5 piano” as many Canadian children do, we said “I am in the first book of *Sonatina*” or “I just finished Czerny Op. 599.” After talking to several of my private music teacher friends from Taiwan and reading the words posted in an online forum about piano teaching and learning from *Global Art Education Network* (La la, 2003), it seems that most teachers in Taiwan used similar materials and pedagogical sequencing. This situation resembles the use of RCM and other examination materials here in Canada. I was curious about the impact of Patricia’s learning experiences on her own teaching.

Similarly to Ward’s (2004) findings regarding teaching practice, Patricia said that she sometimes teaches the way she was taught. She describes her teaching philosophy and teaching attitudes as being somewhat influenced by her own private music teachers: “Our attitudes about teaching are similar. My teacher’s teaching philosophy and mine are similar. For example, we pay much attention in our private lessons. We fully concentrate on what we are teaching. I don’t chat with students during a lesson. I am serious during a lesson and I have high expectations of my students. I expect my students to fulfill my requests right away.”

Besides piano performing, music theory, ear training, and sight-reading are other parts of Patricia’s teaching. Patricia teaches music rudiments up to Grade 2 RCM theory examination in her lessons. After students understand the rudiments of music, Patricia starts analyzing music with her students:

I hope my students are able to hear the chords and harmony in the music. Students understand a piece better by analyzing the different voices in the music. They appreciate the piece more once they know the structure of the piece. Then they understand the structure when they practice by themselves. A piece is more than just

playing a melody and the accompaniment. I want them to remember that when they play at home.

When there is extra time after going through all the repertoire, Patricia does sight-reading exercises and ear training with her students. For students who are taking piano examinations, sight-reading and ear training are strongly emphasized two to three months before the examination. However, Patricia values sight-reading training and ear training significantly besides practicing them for the purpose of the examination: “You have to keep stimulating sight-reading skills as always. As for listening skills, when one has better ears, one learns faster and plays better.”

Patricia organizes student recitals annually between January and March. She believes that recitals establish goals for students by providing opportunities for them to perform: “It’s a chance for self training. It is an opportunity for [students] to perfect their music playing and then perform.” Patricia is responsible for organizing the event: “I do everything from booking the venue, communicating with parents, printing the programs, and preparing food for the receptions.” The recitals take place at various locations — music stores and community arts centres are two common places. “I once held a recital at my student’s home,” Patricia said.

Patricia came to North America as a mature graduate student. She did not study the RCM curriculum as do many Canadian piano students. Since she is now a piano teacher living in Vancouver, however, Patricia teaches the RCM curriculum: “I also prepare students for LRSM (Licentiate of the Royal School of Music) from England, but more people take RCM in general,” Patricia indicates. Even though Patricia has taught the RCM curriculum for several years, she is still learning about the system:

I still wonder how to assign a level to students. What are the requirements for each grade? What do they ask for musically for each grade? I still have difficulty figuring out at which level my students should apply for the examination. What is their real ability? In what grade should they be?

Patricia's words above revealed the questions that I also have as a private music teacher. Although the RCM piano syllabus (Royal Conservatory of Music, 2008) clearly states the examination requirement for each grade, there are times that I have difficulty deciding which level is appropriate for a certain student, especially when the student is new. Instead of considering the practical requirements such as what scales or what musical works students should play for each level, Patricia and I are seeking guidelines that help us prepare our students for the examinations in terms of musical interpretation.

One resource which I often turn to for musical guidelines is the *Teacher's Handbook* (Albergo, Alexander, & Blickenstaff, 2008) of the RCM's official piano method books *Celebration Series*. It includes helpful step by step music analysis details and practice strategies for the repertoire included in the *Celebration Series*. The musical requirements for the examinations are subtly embedded and explained in the teacher's handbook. The guidelines, however, are very specific only to the repertoire included in the *Celebration Series*. For other repertoire listed in the syllabus but not included in the *Celebration Series*, there are no general guidelines for teachers.

In order to help teachers who encounter the same questions as Patricia and I, music education organizations such as RCM (Royal Conservatory of Music) and BCRMTA (British Columbia Music Teacher's Association) have organized various workshops for private music teachers. One of the workshops that I attended was about preparing students to obtain a satisfactory mark from music examinations. The workshop host was from the RCM College of Examiners. He brought in the proposed guidelines for assessment of piano pieces and technique which examiners use in piano examinations. The following are examples of the guidelines:

- Fail: Less than 60
- tempo inconsistent

- rhythm distorted
- inaccurate notes
- technical limitations
- little dynamic contrast
- lacking in continuity

Pass: 60-69

- fairly consistent tempo
- rhythm accurate
- notes fairly accurate
- some technical facility
- basic dynamic contrast
- general continuity

Honours: 70-79

- tempo consistent
- rhythm accurate
- notes accurate
- technical control
- clearly marked dynamic contrast
- some definition in articulation e.g., legato, staccato
- a sense of phrasing and line
- good tone quality
- some idea of style

First Class Honours: 80-89

- tempo: appropriate for the piece, well-maintained
- rhythm: accuracy, vitality and flexibility
- notation: accurate, technically fluent
- dynamics: wide range and subtlety
- phrasing: good flexibility, direction and shaping
- articulation: convincing, e.g., Bach
- tone: good depth and balance
- touch: secure and varied
- style: good concept of style
- fluency of performance

First Class Honours with distinctions: 90 and above

- an exceptional performance, virtually impossible to criticize
  - artistry and flair
  - interpretive insight and a talent for communicating this to the listener
- (Rozanski, 2006, p. 1)

Although the above guidelines are broad and some of the descriptions are vague (e.g., “convincing” articulation), I show these guidelines to my students so they will have a general idea of what is expected. These guidelines usually bring positive results to my students’ examinations. However, I obtain this kind of information because I am a member of BCRMTA. I also know that private music teachers could possibly get the

information through reading newspapers and journals from the music education organizations mentioned above. Nevertheless, it seems that the information is only provided to a limited group of teachers. After looking through syllabi and websites of various music examinations such as the Conservatory Canada, the Royal Conservatory of Music, and the Associate Board of Royal Schools of Music, I found that there is no information about the musical expectations for examinations. In other words, there is no public access to such information unless teachers read the professional publications and attend workshops.

Besides her questions about the musical requirement of the examination, Patricia expressed some dissatisfaction with the RCM system:

I think the ear training is difficult. The technique part of the curriculum is difficult to me. We didn't practice that in Taiwan when we were students.... I am still exploring the system because my students want to take the examinations. I feel that I can teach more systematically without teaching the examination curriculum. This is how they organize the RCM piano books: They include music from various composers and various historical periods in each level. [Each level has only one or two pieces from the same composer.] In my view you need consistency when you are learning a composer's work. For example, the music in Bach's *Well Tempered Clavier* is taken apart [and placed into different RCM levels.] You only play one or two [from the *Well Tempered Clavier*] at this level and maybe there are none [from the *Well Tempered Clavier*] in the book at the next level. If you follow a system like that, you are unable to learn the entire great work. That is why I think it is better that I teach my own curriculum without jumping around the music works.

The above comments bring out several points. Firstly, RCM organizes its piano curriculum according to the technical development of students starting from preliminary level to Grade 10. Students explore various musical styles from different historical periods. The pieces are carefully chosen by the editors so students can learn relevant technique at the appropriate musical and technical developmental stage. For example, RCM Grade 1 piano students are "introduced to elements of Baroque and early Classical style through binary and ternary dance forms. Character pieces help candidates develop their creativity and imagination. Inventions develop hand independence, supported



further with scale and triad technique” (Royal Conservatory of Music, 2008, p. 30). It is true that only one or two pieces of a certain composer or a certain work are included in each level of the RCM piano books due to space. Perhaps there exists consistency of a different kind in the system. Reading through the Grade 9 and 10 repertoire listed in the *Piano Syllabus* (Royal Conservatory of Music, 2008), I found 26 works from *The Well Tempered Clavier*. Looking through past editions of RCM piano books, I found that the editors alternate the repertoire to be included in the book. The piano books are designed for the convenience of teachers, students, and parents so they do not need to buy many books because when they only need one song from the book for the examination. A teacher could still follow the RCM curriculum without using the piano books. That is, Patricia could still teach all of *The Well Tempered Clavier* or the complete book of *Beethoven Sonatas*. In another words, the RCM piano books do not represent the entire RCM curriculum. Using the piano books does not equal teaching the curriculum. This is one thing that many teachers do not know.

As mentioned previously, when Patricia and I were little, the certified music examinations in Taiwan were not as popular as nowadays. Our piano teachers taught us starting with method books. Once our technique was advanced enough, we started to explore the works of individual composers such as Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven. Although each teacher had his/her own curriculum, the curriculum was often designed according to students’ technical development. For example, a teacher would not introduce Bach’s Inventions into lessons before his/her students had completed his Minuets. Messages posted in the *Global Art Education Network* (2008) online forum suggest that piano teachers in Taiwan tend to use the piano teaching materials in a similar order, replicating how they were taught when they were students. Patricia thinks the technical

requirements for the RCM examination are difficult because “[she] didn’t do it when [she was] a student.” She prefers using “her own curriculum” yet she is teaching the RCM materials. Patricia appears to be teaching the RCM materials mainly for the purpose of the examination.

Patricia thinks that students are best able to start taking examinations when they reach RCM Grade 3 level. Agreeing with Duke and Simmons (2006), Patricia found that most students establish and develop their technique in the earlier levels. It is not until Grade 3 that students start to “express music” in their playing. Overtly, Patricia maintains a neutral attitude about sending students to examinations: she neither encourages nor discourages them: “It all depends on what their parents want.” She explained further:

If students are self-motivated and talented and are able to perform well musically, then I won’t ask them to take examinations. They can play in concerts [to get performing experiences.] If students are not self motivated and not talented [that is, they still need to work on their musicality], then I ask them to take examinations because examinations provide a goal and help improve their ability to express music.

Although Patricia has more than 10 years of teaching experience, she is “always thinking about how to solve students’ problems.” For Patricia, motivating students to practice is most difficult: “I find it hard to inspire students to practice. What motivates them to practice is beyond my control.” Research on student practicing does not support Patricia’s view. According to Johnston (2002), students make practicing a daily habit when appropriate practicing strategies are introduced during their lessons. Therefore, rather than finding ways to inspire and motivate students to practice, practicing is something that needs to be taught in the lessons.

Besides having difficulty with student practicing, Patricia feels least successful when she faces students who have poor sight-reading skills:

I cannot stand those who sight-reading poorly. They have a hard time sight-reading during their lessons when I am helping them. I am worried about how they can sight-reading when they practice at home by themselves. I try my best to help them

[develop this skill].... I don't know how they were being trained [in sight-reading] before they came to me, but they have catch up on this skill. I am searching for ways to improve their sight-reading.

Patricia's remarks about her students' poor sight-reading skills might be a result of her own learning experience. Patricia was educated in an environment where she was surrounded by musically talented people since entering the Music Talent Program in Taiwan. She was taught by great musicians who teach at universities and perform worldwide. Her classmates were all musically gifted like her. She was living in a world that values "talented" people, as described by Nettl (1995). With the specific musical training received from school, sight-reading comes naturally to Patricia and her classmates. It was not until Patricia started teaching that she realized that what comes naturally to her might be problematic for her students. Therefore, it is not surprising that we get a sense that Patricia seems to favor those whom she considers talented.

There have been happy moments in Patricia's teaching journey. She feels most successful when students are able to persist at piano learning: "I feel a sense of accomplishment when students continue to play [through all the lessons and practicing]. I also feel happy when they are able to express music instead of just playing the notes." This view corresponds with her earlier comments on how she prefers teaching music to more advanced students because she like to talk about music interpretation more than note learning. Furthermore, Patricia has an opportunity to work with different children when she teaches. She also learns more piano materials: "I had forgotten what I played as a child.... Teaching provides chances for me to get in touch with more music works, both large and small."

Since Patricia has obtained a Doctor of Musical Arts degree, I wondered if she thought that her graduate education had enhanced her teaching. Patricia thinks that her

former teachers in graduate school had a great influence on her:

If I had not attended graduate school, I would probably have stopped practicing a long time ago. Many [teaching] concepts were formed during my lessons and my own practicing. I learned much repertoire. Therefore, when I am teaching children, I am able to know what I want from them.... My teaching was limited before graduate school. I did not build up enough repertoire. I did not think about the children's psychological perspectives nor did I know how to communicate with parents. I lacked experience.

Patricia has a busy schedule. Besides teaching full time, she has two young children who need her attention. Although she wants to go to professional workshops, she cannot find the time. She also does not know much about any music teachers' association.

Since the first interview, Patricia and I have become friends. I live very close to her former home in Coquitlam, and her two children get along with me very well. At the time of my data collection, Patricia's husband was teaching music theory privately as well as being a blackjack dealer in a casino. The couple's work schedule was unstable. I got emergency calls several times from Patricia asking if I could babysit her children for couple of hours because both she and her husband had to work. I usually welcomed her children; we would sing and watch movies together. However, I sense Patricia's struggle as she tries to balance her family and her teaching. In the second interview, Patricia described how her work had interfered with her family life:

My teaching schedule is inconvenient. I start teaching lessons when my children come home from school. Young children really need their mother to spend time with them after school. And I am not there most of time.... When there are situations with my children [getting sick for example] and I am not there, I think about them, and it affects my mood.... I am always tired from driving back and forth between students' houses.

Patricia's dilemma was at least partially resolved after she moved to Burnaby and started teaching from her home.

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Of the four piano students I observed, Natalie was the most advanced student; she was working on Grade 10 repertoire chosen from five historical periods: Baroque,

Classical, Romantic, Post-Romantic, and Contemporary. One selection from each period is required for the Grade 10 RCM piano examination. In addition to the pieces, there are two etudes/studies, technical requirements such as scales, arpeggios, and chords, sight-reading and ear training that form part of the examination. According to Patricia, she usually starts her lessons with technique to help her students warm up. Studies come next, followed by the repertoire. As all the Grade 10 repertoire consists of large scale works, it is impossible to play through all the works in one lesson. Patricia did not actually follow the lesson organization she described to me in Natalie's lessons. For the four lessons I observed, Patricia and Natalie jumped right into the repertoire. Instead of using technique as a warm up activity, studies and techniques were left to the end of the lesson. Patricia later explained that unlike beginners or intermediate students with whom she has to pay special attention to technique, Natalie is a Grade 10 student who is capable of practicing technique on her own. Therefore, she spends more time on repertoire with Natalie.

There was a process for working on repertoire. Patricia always listened to Natalie play through the entire piece before she made any comments:

I try to avoid correcting students in the first play through. I let them finish playing first.... The child has been practicing for a week. There are things that he wants to show. I don't think it's right to keep interrupting.... Although sometimes the playing isn't good, I try to utter the word "good!" after the first play through.

After the whole piece has been played, Patricia and Natalie go back to break the piece into sections and work on details.

Patricia's words about how she thinks it is inappropriate to interrupt students during their first play struck me. Recently, one of my students was crying after his lesson. He had practiced very hard over the week and thought I would be happy to see the results. I was worried, however, about not having enough time to fit in the entire repertoire in one

lesson. I interrupted him and pointed out his mistakes right away. Instead of letting him show his accomplishments, I ignored his efforts. Although he tried to follow my instructions over the lesson, he made even more mistakes because he was concentrating on being upset rather than on the music. It was only after I talked to him after the lesson that I realized how wrong I had been.

A teacher's behaviors and words can have a direct influence on student learning. The above example served as a warning for me. And Patricia's words show and correspond with research that positive feedback in any form creates a more welcoming learning environment for students (Zhukov, 2008). Nevertheless, with Patricia's approach, a teacher needs to have a good recollection of what the students do and what needs to be changed. Students might not aware of or forget about the mistakes they made after the play through (Karlsson & Juslin, 2008). Finding a balance between the two approaches might be a solution.

Because Natalie is an advanced student, Patricia emphasized music interpretation in her lessons. Teaching music interpretation requires a lot of teacher modeling. Similar to Duke's (1999) observation of teaching strategies, performing was the main pedagogical method that Patricia used. The modeling activities mentioned in Dickey's (1992) study also appeared in Patricia's lessons. Patricia played in her lessons to demonstrate tempo, ornaments, rhythm, phrasing, dynamics, articulation, and the voicing of the piece; sometimes she played alone to emphasize her points. Sometimes she played with Natalie as a way of guiding Natalie into the correct notes or the appropriate tempo. She played in phrases and sections when identifying a problem and showing the solutions. She practiced repeatedly with Natalie to show encouragement and support. She also performed the entire repertoire to demonstrate the overall genre of the piece. Singing was

another modeling method used by Patricia. She sang to identify the notes in solfège syllables. The use of the solfège system once again suggested that Patricia is teaching as taught. After talking to several colleagues from the British Columbia Registered Music Teachers Association and students with previous piano lesson experiences in Taiwan and Korea, I found that the use of solfège in private music lessons is not as popular in North America as in Asia and Europe. Patricia may have learned to use it because she was taught solfège as a student. She hummed the melody to show phrasing, articulation, and dynamics. Finally, she sang to conduct the rhythm and tempo of the piece. The uses of singing in Patricia's lessons correspond with Rose and Buell's (1998) findings.

In order to provoke student interest, using a technique Duke, Flowers, and Wolfe (1997) observed, Patricia played through all the pieces from the same historical period from the RCM Grade 10 piano book before teaching a new piece. After hearing the overall performance of this repertoire, Natalie selected the piece she wanted to play. She explained the reason she chose the "*Capriccio sopra la Lontananza del fratello diletteissimo*" by J. S. Bach: "I like it because it is lively. And not too fast. It's sort of like a marching piece...and the [fugal entry] comes in [alternatively] in the right hand and left hand. It's very cool." After Natalie selected the piece, Patricia talked about the background information such as the biography of the composer, the origin of the piece, and the style or form of the piece. Natalie was then left to sight-read and learn the notes over the week by herself.

Once Natalie had the basic ideas of the notes, Patricia analyzed the music with her. Together, they looked for keys in each section and labeled the sections with the appropriate terms according to form and genre. After the music was analyzed, Patricia practiced the music with Natalie in small sections, usually one or two phrases at a time.

Repetition, playing with a slower tempo, and practicing with separate hands seemed to be the main practice strategies when Patricia and Natalie worked on details. A metronome was used to gradually increase the playing speed after Natalie had mastered all the notes and had some ideas about the interpretation. It was only when Natalie was playing to Patricia's satisfaction that they moved on to the next goal. The working-on-small-section method is similar to the using of zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1934).

As in Rostvall and West (2003), interactions between teacher and student in Patricia's lessons were initiated by the teacher who gave instructions by talking and singing while Natalie usually responded with piano performance. Natalie rarely talked or asked questions during her lessons. When she did, she answered Patricia in short sentences. The only time Natalie expressed her opinion was at repertoire selection times. As they were going through as much repertoire as possible in one hour, Patricia mentioned that she did not have time to chat with Natalie. However, I noticed that Patricia stayed after the lesson to talk to the parents and she chatted with Natalie at that time.

I discovered that there was a device sitting on the side of the piano while I watched the video clips of the lessons. At first I thought it was an electronic metronome, then I saw Natalie checking the device in the middle of a lesson. She removed a cassette tape. It turned out that the device was a portable cassette recorder. Natalie uses it to record all her lessons. She listens to the tape whenever necessary during the rest of the week when she practices; the tape serves as a reminder of what happened in the lesson: "I know what the teacher said so I am able to remember." Natalie's parents had asked her to record her lessons when she first started taking piano lessons: "I keep forgetting to turn the tape recorder on now, so I don't really listen to it anymore." She further explained that the



recording did not help her much because “the teacher already writes everything in my book. [The recording] just doesn’t do much.”

Not surprisingly, given the advanced level of the student, no physical rewards or punishments were evident in Natalie’s lessons beyond general verbal encouragement throughout the lesson. Nevertheless, Patricia gives out stickers for younger children as rewards. Small gifts such as music folders, pens, and magnets are also given out at recitals: “I don’t punish; I scold enough during the lessons,” Patricia said. I was curious about what she considered scolding so I inquired further. She explained: “I only scold when students do not practice enough.” Since there is no punishment, Patricia expresses herself in a straightforward way when students do not meet her expectations:

There are two situations. One is when I really get upset; one is when I need to pretend to be upset to give students a warning. When I am angry, I raise my voice and I stand up. Then I walked around a bit without speaking and wait for myself to calm down. Students know that I am not happy and they stop playing.... [The pretending to be upset] is far more difficult than when I am really upset. I am not happy but I do not explode. I need to talk to my students in a calming way.... I speak in a serious voice, especially when students’ parents are present.

As both of Natalie’s parents had retired, they both listen to Natalie when she has lessons. Because of the physical organization of their bachelor suite, they wait in the sitting area while their daughter has lessons. Natalie is used to her parents’ presence in her daily activities; she appears at ease. Although Patricia feels uncomfortable at times with this arrangement, she says she does not mind her students’ parents watching her lessons: “I feel uneasy at times. But that’s okay. I just teach as usual. I need to pay extra attention to the words I use when speaking though.” In addition, Patricia encourages the parents of younger beginners to sit in the lessons: “I like the parents of the young beginners to participate in the lessons. They need to know what I have taught and help their children at home to practice. Some parents just ask children to practice by

themselves. It does not work that way for young beginners.” Patricia’s words show that she considers cooperation between the teacher and the students’ parents to be significant in children’s learning. Thus, the communication and the relationship between the teacher and the students’ parents are important.

Patricia sees herself and students’ parents as a team: “We cooperate with each other to make the learning pleasant for children. I try my best to fulfill the parents’ expectations.” When solving disagreements between herself and her students’ parents, Patricia listens to and respects the parents’ opinions: “They often express their opinions about the learning materials and the progress of their child. I listen to them and try to find ways to improve the situation.” As Patricia is teaching mostly advanced students, I wondered whether some parents push their children to take examinations without realizing that their child may not do well. Patricia confirmed my suspicion:

I tell them that it is too early to go to the examination but I usually go along with the parents’ request if they insist. I require the child to practice a lot and have extra lessons. I try to prepare the child as best I can but I also inform the parents that child might not be ready for the examination.

Patricia communicates with her students’ parents both in person and by telephone. Parents often call her when a scheduled lesson does not work well for them. On the other hand, they discuss the child’s progress and goals for practicing in person after each lesson. Since many of Patricia’s students are teenagers at advanced levels, she is careful about what she says to students’ parents in front of students: “I give encouraging words when both parents and children are around... I don’t like to speak of students’ flaws in front of their parents...because these flaws can be corrected.”

Her expectations of students are clear. She expects all her students to have good practice habits. “I want them to have a regular practice schedule which they do voluntarily. [They] should set goals for every practice session.” Patricia expects her

students' parents to support their children by encouraging them instead of criticizing: "children become depressed when they receive too much criticism." On the other hand, Patricia thinks that her students' do not all expect the same results from her: "Some ask that I prepare their kids to pass a certain grade. Some of them just want their children to enjoy music." Interestingly, Patricia has different expectations of her Canadian students who are not of Taiwanese or Chinese descent:

I expect more from the Chinese or Taiwanese children. I state my requests clearly about how much time they need to practice and what they need to practice.... The way they are educated at home matches more my teaching style.... Canadian students are different. They whine. They express their emotions more. I go along with their emotion. I'm not too pushy. I don't want them to feel that [playing piano] is difficult. I talk to them differently.

Although Patricia did not address the issue explicitly, I feel that she attempts to provide a positive learning environment for her students even though her teaching style is more traditional and emphasizes piano performance.

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So far I have talked about what occurred during the lessons and the values and teaching beliefs of Patricia. Now I proceed to the other important members of the private lesson triad — Mrs. Chen and Natalie. Their story of practicing is included in their biographies. What has not been examined is how they value learning and their expectations of private music lessons.

Mrs. Chen is involved in her daughter's private music lessons in several ways. She hires teachers and pays for the lessons. She reminds Natalie to practice. She encourages and listens to Natalie's playing. For Mrs. Chen, the most difficult thing in this whole private music learning activity is to make her daughter play technical exercises such as scales and chords: "My daughter dislikes playing scales. She is willing to play the

repertoire but not the scales. I have to give her more rewards in order to make her play scales.” Mrs. Chen encourages her daughter to take piano examinations. “I believe that it is a way of proving her ability. We will know her level of achievement better.... Besides, everyone else is doing the same thing,” Mrs. Chen added.

Mrs. Chen expects her daughter’s piano teacher to be a “good teacher” who teaches all the necessary playing techniques to her daughter. She hopes that Natalie can acquire patience through private music lessons: “My daughter has an outgoing personality. She is always active. I hope that she is able to sit for one or two hours at a time when playing piano.” In addition to Natalie’s learning, Mrs. Chen also benefits from Natalie’s private music lessons: “I am happy to see her playing. I feel that she has fulfilled my dream.” The happiness that comes from seeing Natalie’s progress in piano is what Mrs. Chen has gained through her daughter’s private music lessons.

Natalie dislikes playing scales and she enjoys her piano lessons most when she is learning a new song: “I like the part when we start choosing pieces and I start to sight-reading it.” On the other hand, Natalie finds the pressure of examinations difficult. Examination results affect Natalie’s emotions: She feels happy when she receives good marks and upset when she gets low marks. How well Natalie has practiced is also related to Natalie’s emotions. She is delighted when she has practiced and is praised by her teacher. Likewise, she feels defeated when she has not practiced and is frustrated because she does not see progress. So far, Natalie has learned different things from different teachers. She has learned assorted playing techniques from teachers with varied personalities.

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Natalie stopped her piano lessons for a while after she entered the Transition program at UBC. She lost contact with Patricia after Patricia changed her phone number when she moved. I recently saw Natalie at a social function. She has grown to be a beautiful young woman. She asked me for Patricia's number. I was glad that by doing this research, I was not only telling people's story but also connecting them. Although Natalie is no longer taking lessons, she still enjoys playing piano on her own. Patricia once mentioned that she believes the purpose of music learning is to provide people with easier access to music. Together with the support of Natalie's parents, they have achieved this purpose.

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This is my last private music teaching and learning story. Patricia is a problem solver. She believes that her job as a teacher is to remove student doubts. This last triad consisted of a teacher who is serious about her teaching, a smart girl who is progressive about her learning, and a mother who placed a high value in music. Next, I will discuss what I have learned from the five stories in an analytical chapter.

## Chapter Ten: Some Answers

*“By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by imitation, which is easiest; And third, by experience, which is bitterest.”*  
Confucius

Finally, I have arrived at the culminating chapter of this study. I began my research many months ago hoping to understand the culture of private music lessons of Taiwanese Canadians. During this long journey, I have tried to learn about private music teaching and learning by looking at teacher participants’ experiences as well as reflecting on my own teaching and learning experiences. In previous chapters I described in detail the teaching and learning experiences of five triads of Taiwanese Canadian private music teachers, students, and parents. This chapter reveals the analytical aspects and the conclusions of my findings corresponding to my four research questions:

- What are the cultural beliefs underpinning private music lessons for Taiwanese Canadians?
- What kinds of teaching and learning experiences occur in Canadian Taiwanese private music lessons?
- What is the context of the private music lessons of Taiwanese Canadians?
- How do Taiwanese Canadians value private music lessons?

Not surprisingly, during my analysis, I found that the teaching and learning experiences of Taiwanese Canadians are necessarily intertwined within the context of their teaching and learning as well as their beliefs. As culture is “the sum total of a community’s ways of thinking and living” (Reimer, 2003, p. 171), it was difficult to isolate people’s values and experiences when describing contexts. It is also irresponsible to talk about values without addressing context because “much of the meaning of our lives, including musical meaning, stems from the particularities of our social condition” (p. 171).

Instead of presenting my findings in a way that directly and immediately answers my four research questions, in this chapter I have grouped my findings into the topics that

emerged in the research:

- cultural background and influences,
- private music teaching and learning,
- students and their learning, and
- valuing private music lessons.

In addition, while many of the findings were of a general nature applicable to private music lessons in Canada and Taiwan, there were a few more specifically culturally based themes that emerged:

- Obedience or independence,
- Removing doubt,
- “Putting into practice what you have learned,”
- “*Pei*” — Keeping company, and
- Status symbol.

I begin by presenting the cultural context of Taiwanese Canadian private music teachers, students, and their parents. As the private music teachers were once private music students, I have also integrated their experiences as students and their family backgrounds into my discussion.

### **Cultural Background and Influences**

The Taiwanese Canadians who participated in this research were all born in Taiwan and came to Canada between 1992 and 2000. Statistics from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2007) indicate that there was a “*Yi Min Chao*” (immigration upsurge) of Taiwanese from 1990 and 1997, and according to information provided by the Vancouver Taipei Economic Cultural Office, approximately 80,000 Taiwanese immigrants currently live in Greater Vancouver, BC. Although Taiwan is the one of the top ten Asian sources of Canadian immigrants, Taiwanese immigrants as a whole are the least studied Chinese subgroup in North America (Lin, 1996).

Several factors contributed to Taiwanese immigration to Canada. First, the political friction between Taiwan and mainland China since 1949 contributed to a fear of political

instability and war; people emigrated from Taiwan in search of peace and safety (BC Statistics Canada, 2008; Lin, 1996). In addition, because of political tensions, it was mandatory for Taiwanese males to serve in the military once they reached the age of 18. Many parents sent their boys away to avoid military service (Shih, 1999). None of my participants claimed the latter as their main reason for immigration.

Secondly, people emigrated from Taiwan looking for a better quality of life for their offspring (Hsu & Chiang, 2004; Lin, 1996). When asked why they chose Canada, four participants stated that either their parents or spouse believed that Canada has a better quality of life than Taiwan or the United States.

Third, Taiwanese immigrants believe that the Western education system (exemplified in Australia, Canada, and the United States) would benefit their children (Hsu & Chiang, 2004; Lin, 1996). As education in Asian countries tends to emphasize high academic performance as a result of the Confucian influence (Chan, 1999), students face a lot pressure in school: “Academic achievement and hard work is seen by many as the main way of moving up the social ladder for the Chinese around the world” (p. 298). Seeking more learning opportunities for their children, parents with means immigrated to countries such as Australia, Canada, and the United States. Four of the families in this study reported that they left Taiwan for their children’s education.

Lastly, relatives living in Canada were also a major contributing factor (Lin, 1996). Patricia moved to Canada with her husband because other family members were already Canadian citizens. Mrs. Ho has a sister residing in Toronto. After immigrants become permanent residents in Canada, their siblings and parents are more likely to follow their footsteps. This is what Lin called “chain migration” or “sequential migration.”



### **Private Music Lessons — for the Wealthy**

According to Duke et al. (1997), in America, parents of private music students are typically upper and upper middle class college graduates working in the professions. These parents “have educational background and financial wherewithal to provide nearly limitless opportunities for their children” (p. 77). Parents of Taiwanese Canadian private music students share the social economic background of the parents of the American private music students. Unlike earlier Chinese immigrants who were often from the laboring class trying to earn a better living by immigrating to a new country, recent Taiwanese immigrants tend to hold a higher social position. They have higher educational levels and are usually small business owners or professionals (Lin, 1996; Shih, 1999). In fact, a majority of recent Taiwanese immigrants came to Canada under the Business Immigration Program. Most Taiwanese immigrants who landed between 1991 and 1995 were admitted under Investor Class, Entrepreneur Class, and Self-Employed Class (BC Statistic Canada, 2008). In other words, one needed to have achieved a certain financial status to immigrate to Canada. The teacher participants’ families fit into the above classifications.

Lily, Sally, and Lauren’s family came in 1992 when immigration had become a growing trend in Taiwan. Although Patricia and Frank came later when they formed their own family, Patricia’s parents had moved to Canada in 1995. The teachers’ families are all from the upper-middle class in Taiwan. Lily’s father managed an architectural firm. Sally’s father had a handbag factory. Lauren and Patricia’s fathers owned trading companies, while Frank’s father was a government official. Studying music is costly; it is a long term investment for the parents of music students. The economic status of the teachers’ families reflected the high financial cost of nurturing a professional musician in

the Taiwanese community.

The parent participants in study were part of a younger generation who came to Canada around the year 2000. Their financial status was not as high as that of the teachers' parents. However, similar characteristics were shared between the two generations.

The educational level of the parent participants was generally high, as Lin (1996) suggested. Among the five mothers I interviewed, three mothers (Mrs. Woo, Mrs. Choi, and Mrs. Ho) were graduates from either universities or vocational colleges, and two mothers (Mrs. Yang and Mrs. Chen) were high school graduates. Their spouses all have college degrees. Two spouses have master degrees (Mr. Choi, and Mr. Ho), and one spouse holds a degree in dental practice (Dr. Woo). Three women worked prior moving to Canada: Mrs. Yang owned a small restaurant; Mrs. Choi worked in a trading company; and Mrs. Chen was a real estate agent. Mrs. Woo and Mrs. Ho became full-time housewives after giving birth to their children. The spouses worked in different jobs such as dentistry, trade, technology, and machinery. Although they would not consider themselves to be living a "life of luxury," these women had prosperous lives in Taiwan: "We had a satisfactory life in Taiwan. We had a good income" (Mrs. Choi).

Moving to a new country meant compromising and adjusting to change. One of the dilemmas that Taiwanese immigrants faced is whether to become an "Astronaut family" or full settlers. The term "Astronaut" is used to describe the phenomenon that the husbands of immigrant families stay and work in the home country to support their family financially while the wives live alone in the new country to take care of children (Lin, 1996; Sheppard, 1998). The husbands fly back and forth between their families and work once or twice yearly during holidays. Settlers are those families who leave

everything behind and start new lives in a new country.

There were three situations when husbands/fathers of the immigrant families become astronauts. First, business owners like Lily, Lauren, and Sally's fathers had obligations to their employees. It was difficult for them to withdraw from their businesses all at the once. It was even more difficult for them to give up the status and the high income to start everything from scratch in the new country. Secondly, professionals such as doctors and lawyers might have difficulty obtaining licenses to practice in Canada because of the language barrier and legal requirements. To avoid the hassle of going through the system to obtain a license in a new country, many of them chose to stay in their home country. Mr. Woo, a dentist, is an example of this category. Finally, living expenses are higher in Canada than in Asia. Moreover, immigrants are not always able to find a desirable job in Canada. Many men choose to work in places where they had a secure income in order to provide a living for their families. Mr. Ho, who worked in the technology in Shanghai, is such an example.

The impact of the long term absence of husbands/fathers is of interest to sociologists (Sheppard, 1998; Shih, 1999). Although this absence is not the focus of my study, it is still relevant. I did not hear complaints from the teacher participants that their fathers' absence negatively affected their lives. It seemed that they adapted to their fathers' absence: "My father is always busy with business. He did not care too much about our upbringing. It's my mother who took care of us" (Lauren). It might also be possible that all these teachers immigrated during their high school years and were more mature than elementary children in coping with the situation.

On the other hand, the two astronaut families (Mrs. Woo and Mrs. Ho) who participated in this study commented on the impact of this absence in their lives. Both

Mrs. Woo and Mrs. Ho claimed that it was very difficult to be a single parent for most of the year. As Sheppard (1998) described, these wives and children talked to their husbands/fathers by e-mail, telephone, MSN, and Skype. They reported on and discussed school life and daily routines through this “satellite” system (Sheppard, 1998; Shih, 1999). Mrs. Woo said that her husband inquired about their children on a daily basis. Therefore, despite the fact that her husband was physically not around and she was sometimes tired from running all the errands, she did not feel abandoned. Mrs. Ho, on the contrary, thought she was left alone to face all the challenges of raising children.

While some immigrants choose to be astronauts because of the secure income, the Chens, Choys, and Yangs were adventurous settlers. As Shih (1999) reported, these settlers had difficulty finding jobs when they first moved to Canada. Mrs. Choi mentioned that even though her husband has a master’s degree from a university in the United States, it took her husband one year to find a job. Although Mr. and Mrs. Chen had retired early before they moved to Canada, Mr. Chen also talked about the difficulty of finding a job in Canada. Only Mr. Yang did not have any difficulty finding a job when his family first moved to Canada. Moreover, all three wives became full time housewives after immigrating to Canada, and the previously double household incomes became single incomes. Taking private music lessons requires long term physical and financial support. Socio-economic status, thus, was an important indicator in the context of private music lessons. The fact that these families could still afford private music lessons suggests that these settlers were successful in generating financial support in Canada.

### **Theme 1. Obedience or Independence**

Taiwanese cultural values have a strong but unacknowledged influence in private music lessons. A theme that permeated this research was an underlying contradiction between traditional values of obedience to authority and the appeal of independence available to new immigrants to Canada. Cultural influences were deeply rooted in the private music teaching and learning experiences of Taiwanese Canadians; they permeated almost every aspect of private music lessons in my study. Confucian values, especially, had a significant impact on the private music teaching and learning experiences of Taiwanese Canadians.

Rather than seeing people as individuals, Confucianism views people as a collective organized in a hierarchically oriented system. This hierarchical system is based on five virtues and their corresponding relationships: Filial piety — father and son; faithfulness — husband and wife; brotherhood — elder and younger brother; loyalty — monarch and subject; and sincerity — between friends (Chan, 1999). Reciprocity, obligation, duty, security, tradition, dependence, harmony, obedience to authority, and equilibrium are the values shared in the collective society (Brand, 2002).

One of the Confucian influences identified in this study was obedience to authority. In Taiwanese society, authority is attributed to anyone in a higher position in the hierarchy. Elders, teachers, and parents are all sources of authority. Obedience is expected of those in a lower position in the hierarchy. In return, individuals in higher positions assume responsibility for those below them in the hierarchy (Pratt et al., 1999). Therefore, younger people respect older people, while older people take care of the young. Students follow teachers' words because teachers provide knowledge, and children obey their parents who raise, educate, and financially support them. Although most of the student

participants came to Canada at a young age and were immersed in Western values in school, they were reared with traditional values at home. When parents and teachers described their children and students, they often used the words “*guai*” and “*ting hua*.” A “*guai*” child is well behaved. “*Ting hua*” literally means following the word; it refers to someone who is obedient. It was clear that Taiwanese parents and teachers expected their children to be obedient. An obedient child is a “*guai*” child. All student participants except Jack could be described as obedient children in the traditional way. These children have learned to be obedient. They obeyed their parents’ decisions regarding instrumental lessons and practiced when ordered (although parents liked to call these orders “reminders”).

Although the teacher-student relationship is not one of the five relationships described in Confucianism, Chinese people have long regarded the role of a teacher as the role of a father (Pratt et al., 1998). According to *Shi Ji (The Records of a Grand Historian)*, a Chinese classic history book written by Ma Qian Si (1994) from the Han dynasty, Confucius’s student Zi Xia said the famous proverb “*Yi ri wei shi zhong sheng wei fu*” [Even if someone is your teacher for only a day, you should regard him like your father for the rest of your life]. Another Confucian Chinese classic for young children from the Song dynasty, *San Zi Jing (The Three Characters Classic)* by Ying Ling Wang (n.d.), paired these two sentences together: “*Yang bu jiao, fu zhi guo; jiao bu yan, shi zhi duo*” [If the child is fed and left uneducated, the father is at fault; if the child is educated but left undisciplined, the teacher is at fault]. The words from these classic books reinforce the important status of teachers in Chinese society. As the teacher is often treated as a fatherly figure, the teacher-student relationship is similar to that of a parent and a child. In addition, Pratt et al. (1999) summarized Chinese people’s definition of an

effective teacher:

Effective teachers were often characterized as having a close, protective relationship with students, similar to that of a coach or even a parent. As with parents, effective teachers were portrayed as strict, with high expectations. In addition, they were portrayed as having an appropriate measure of [affection].... Effective teachers were expected to care about students as individuals, to understand their difficulties and to guide them in their learning and personal development. (p. 247)

During my four observations, the teachers were the ones who initiated all the action while most students obeyed their teachers' instructions. Like West and Rostvall's (2003) research of Western private music lessons, teacher participants dominated all lessons. Student participants did what they were told to do. Even though younger student like Leo appeared to be distracted with the presence of the camera, he listened to his teacher when she called him and returned quickly to his usual behavior. Even Jack, who was described as a "*bu guai*" [misbehaving] child by his mother, acted obediently during his lessons. Furthermore, when asked why they participated in the research, most students claimed that they did not know anything about the study until I showed them the participant consent form. Apparently, their teachers and the parents had not thought of asking the children's permission. Just as expected, the students obeyed decisions made for them by authorities.

Respect for and obedience to authority was firmly implanted during childhood and carried into the adulthood of participants. These values remained unchanged after they moved to the West. Instead of pursuing a subject of interest to her, Sally followed her father's wish to study business in her early college years. Similarly, Judy obeyed her mother by accepting the musical path which her mother deliberately created for her. Instead of staying with her friends, she went to Germany alone because her mother thought it was a better place for her to study. Judy's mother further added: "I am a very stubborn person. If I insist on something, she will respect my wishes. She complains at

times but does not contradict my decisions.” This example shows the power of authority and the expected obedient behavior of Taiwanese children, an expectation of parents, teachers, and largely, of students. Obedience actually connects with another Confucian value – the avoidance of challenging authority.

Authorities such as teachers and parents are the people who provide wisdom, knowledge, and expertise. Confucianists believe that not challenging authority is the proper way to respect authority. “The pressure to preserve harmony, to conform, to avoid loss of face and shame” (Chan, 1999, p. 298) are the concepts which Chinese apply on a daily basis including in teaching and learning. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that certain teaching and learning styles are preferred in Chinese society. The student participants rarely asked questions of their teachers, nor did they question their judgment. Asking questions sometimes can be considered a form of challenging authority. A simple “yes” or “no” were the most frequent words spoken by students during their lessons. The student participants only spoke when asked. Their role in the teacher-student interaction seemed passive. The only exception was Judy who was more self-determining in her musical learning; she approached Frank with questions and was not afraid to chat with him. Her response might also be because Judy did not think of Frank as a teacher. She described Frank as “a teacher who is like a friend. I don’t think of him as an [authority] who is high up and [hard to approach].” The barrier between the authority and follower was broken, resulting in Judy feeling comfortable talking with her teacher.

Not only do students generally respect teachers in an obedient fashion, but students’ parents also treat teachers as authorities. The teacher participants indicated that they rarely talked to parents about music lessons unless the student did not meet the practice requirements. Parent participants, on the other hand, claimed that they communicated



well with teachers. What they meant by good communication usually was that the teachers informed them about how their children were doing during the lessons. However, they did not challenge the teacher when a conflict happened. For example, when Leo had a problem with his first piano teacher, instead of discussing the issue with his teacher, Mrs. Choi solved Leo's problem by finding him another teacher. In the other words, Mrs. Choi saved the teacher's face by not confronting him about the way he taught.

As the participants were teaching me about their experiences, I considered them to be authority figures in our relationships. Nevertheless, because of my status as a teacher, parent and student participants saw me more like an authority figure. As a Taiwanese Canadian who is also influenced by Confucian values, there were many times when I felt uncomfortable asking challenging questions. It is common for Taiwanese people to conceal their true feelings and opinions to avoid embarrassing and offending themselves and others (Chan, 1999). Because most of my interview questions were directly related to teacher participants' teaching experience, I thought that some of my probing questions (e.g., why did you say this or why didn't you do that?) might be perceived as judgmental in a negative sense. I had to phrase my questions carefully so participants would not feel that I was intruding in their professional realm. I was not aware of that I was avoiding challenging authority until my supervisor pointed it out. It was then that I switched my thinking into a Western mode and resumed my role as a researcher. This avoidance of challenging authority influenced my data collection to some degree. I was unable to get some of my answers in the first interview because I was afraid to ask probing questions. To avoid embarrassment, I cleared some of the questions that arose while I was analyzing the data in the informal interviews through e-mail, online message exchanges, or telephone conversations. By this time, teacher participants and I knew each other better

so my uneasiness diminished.

Interestingly, I did not have the same uneasy feeling when I talked with students and parents as I did when I talked with the teacher participants. Since I am also a private music teacher, I knew how to communicate better with parents and students. The interview questions I prepared for parents and students were more related to their daily living experiences as opposed to the more professionally related questions for the teachers. As a result, I worried less about hurting their pride.

In addition to the traditional value of obedience described by the participants and observed in the private music lessons, a contradictory value also emerged in the study – the valuing of independence as observed in the West. Contrary to the Confucian collectivism of the east, Western individualism emphasizes independence and achievement. Self-governance, individual autonomy, individual effort, and an ambivalence towards authority are valued (Xiao, 1999).

As described at the beginning of the chapter, one of the reasons for Taiwanese immigrants to move to Canada was to provide their children with a better education. Taiwanese generally believe that Western education is better than the current education practiced in Taiwan as evident in Mrs. Yang's interview: "Canadian education provides students [necessary skills for daily living.] The Taiwanese tend to push students to be elitists in specific areas." Life skills are the basic skills for people to live independently. Mrs. Yang's words revealed that the notion of independence for living was what appealed to her.

All the participants identified the intense academic pressure in schools in Taiwan. Ever since a Chinese emperor introduced the world's first examination system in the Han dynasty (7<sup>th</sup> century), the Chinese have been known for their strong emphasis on

academic performance. In addition, the Chinese believe that striving for academic achievement and hard work are the main ways to climb the social ladder (Chan, 1999).

Although educational policies in Taiwan are always changing, from the descriptions of the participants, the way teachers transmit and students acquire knowledge has remained unchanged. All participants who had school experiences in Taiwan related their school experiences with terms such as “test” and “examination.” As Pratt et al. (1999) explained, Chinese/Taiwanese teachers use a Transmission teaching style based on passing on knowledge from textbooks and assessing knowledge by examinations. Therefore, the goal for the teachers was to present the content of the texts correctly. Frank, for example, taught music history and theory in a way which heavily relied on textbooks. Although he was largely unaware of his pedagogical style, Frank recapitulated the teaching style he had experienced — a so called “spoon-fed education” (Kember, 2000; Wong, 2004).

The participants also reported that memorization was the ultimate way to acquire knowledge in Taiwan. This is what Lily said about her learning in Taiwan: “The teacher teaches; I absorb. The teacher says something; I memorize. The teacher wants you to do something. I do it.” The teacher and his words are the absolute authority, and memorization is the way to master knowledge. Pratt et al. (1999) talked about the two functions of the memorization: “First, it is a strategy for coping with a great deal of material and the high expectations from family and teachers. Second, through drill and repetition (as a means of memorizing) students are beginning the process of understanding and, hence, initiate the second stage of learning” (p. 253). According to Pratt et al., understanding, application, and questioning or modifying what is learned are the three learning stages after memorization. However, in Taiwan, respect for teachers

sometimes makes the last learning stage, “questioning,” impossible because it is disrespectful to challenge authority. Therefore, students who rely on the memorization and are not guided into the next three stages tend to develop fewer critical thinking skills (Chan, 1999).

Contrary to Chinese learning, which is dominated by rote memorization and examinations, Canadian education, in the view of the study participants, gives more freedom for student development: “The teacher doesn’t tell you what to do. S/he provides you with suggestions, then you make your own choices,” Lily said. Instead of students being given facts to memorize, projects are assigned in Canadian schools. Instead of receiving information like a sponge, students are encouraged to be explorers of knowledge. Judy further added: “School here is bringing us the skills which we can [apply] to our daily lives.” According to Wong (2004), the Western education system tends to emphasize a student-centered approach that values critical thinking and speculative questioning. In addition, Western teachers provided general directions rather than step by step procedures. Western education expects students to challenge the content of the text rather than following it blindly (Chan, 1999; Pratt et al., 1999). In other words, Western education promotes independence in thinking.

Teachers also have a different role in Canadian schools. They are facilitators rather than the sole source of authority (Pratt et al., 1999). According to Pratt et al., Western teachers “sought to engender a more egalitarian relationship with their students, while also carrying on with their professional role and responsibilities” (p. 247). The participants described their Canadian teachers positively in contrast to the more negative stories of their Taiwanese teachers. They used words such as “nice” and “friendly” when describing Canadian teachers as opposed to the “strict” and “mean” descriptions of the

Taiwanese teacher.

With less academic pressure in Canadian schools, children have more time to participate in and acquire knowledge in other disciplines. Sally and Lauren resumed their piano lessons after coming to Canada because “school was more relaxing.” While students the same age as Heather were studying intensively for high school entrance examinations in Taiwan, she had time to develop her interest in music on three instruments. The participants’ perception of a more balanced education in Canada might be the reason behind Taiwanese immigrants’ view of Canadian education as better.

Interestingly, even when they were from the same family, children’s behavior differed depending on where they received their primary education. Both Mrs. Yang and Mrs. Woo have three children. The two older children went to school in Taiwan, and the youngest came to Canada before school age. The older children, who assimilated Taiwanese values, were obedient and less aggressive. “They were shy about showing their true feelings and afraid of putting themselves forward in school,” Mrs. Woo stated. The youngest child, however, was the opposite of his brothers and sisters. Instead of following orders and doing as told, the youngest child was encouraged to explore and learn on his own; he was more open and more aggressive in his learning. Nonetheless, Mrs. Yang felt that the youngest child was not as disciplined as his siblings. We can also suggest, however, that the youngest child has adapted to the Canadian culture and is influenced by the value of independence in expressing himself as an individual.

Despite the fact that parent and teacher participants preferred Western education over the Taiwanese culture, a clash of cultures was evident in the participants’ descriptions. Even though the teachers were teaching Western art music, Confucian influences could be found throughout their lessons. While thinking that Western

education is “relaxing” and less pressured, the parents and teachers still valued “discipline” and “good grades.” It seems that teacher and parent participants wanted to keep what they perceived to be the advantages of the both cultures – the “independence” of the West and the “obedience” of the East, even though these values are not necessarily compatible. In another words, while the participants were absorbing Western values, they did not deny their roots. In fact, the participants had somewhat limited themselves by staying within the Taiwanese community instead of melting into the mainstream Canadian society.

Although the teacher participants were all educated in North America, spoke fluent English, and had lived in Canada for several years, cultural barriers still existed in their teaching. Most of the student participants were second generation Taiwanese immigrants. Others came from China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Vietnam. These students were all of Chinese ancestry. Lily, Patricia, and Frank also had experience teaching “true Canadians.” They defined “true Canadians” as the white people from mainstream society.

Cultural differences may have influenced teacher participants to select Chinese students instead of students from the mainstream society. Language was one factor that encouraged teacher participants to stay with students from their own ethnic group. After moving to Canada, Patricia advertised only in a Chinese newspaper: “I feel more comfortable teaching in Mandarin.” All teacher participants used Mandarin mixed with English in their lessons. The instructions and directives were mostly given in Mandarin while more technical words like musical dynamics were provided in English. Teachers said that they could express themselves better when using their mother tongue: “It is easier to express myself in Mandarin. I need to use more sentences to explain what I really mean in English” (Sally). Lauren expressed the same view: “English is not my first

language. Sometimes when I need to express a word I can't find the right English vocabulary. I have to change direction to explain what I mean." Lily was the only teacher comfortable with English; she used more English than the other teacher participants.

The other reason that teacher participants preferred to teach students from Chinese backgrounds was that they shared cultural values. Because of the Confucian value that promotes high academic performance, Chinese parents tend to push their children to do their best when learning is involved. Teacher participants thought that Chinese parents were more willing to cooperate with them in terms of monitoring children practicing. Lily provided an example:

When I taught white kids, their parents did not push their children to practice. But no matter how motivated they are about learning, children tend to be lazy about practicing and need to be reminded. I felt that these [white] students progressed more slowly than my other students. I tried to communicate this problem to their parents without success. The parents do not understand why they need to help their children practice. They think it is the teacher's responsibility to motivate children.

In addition, these teachers are accustomed to obedience from Chinese students. They noticed the differences in their students' responses to their instructions in the lessons. Patricia explained: "I ask more from my Chinese students. I give specific orders about how much they should practice. I am more direct with them. The [white people] on the other hand, they whine more. They are not afraid to reject my instruction. I don't pressure them [in the way I do Chinese students]." When asked why she treated the students differently, Patricia made a point: "The way the [Chinese children] are brought up matches my teaching style. The children don't accept my teaching if it is too different from how their family educates them." In other words, teachers felt safer teaching Chinese children because they share similar cultural values. It was also easier to communicate with others who held similar beliefs. The examples given by the teacher participants might have been based on stereotypes and biased views because they had not

taught enough students from the mainstream society to make a valid comparison.

The examples show that cultural values are deeply embedded in the teaching of Taiwanese Canadians even though there is a clash over desirable ends — obedience or independence. I have also noticed this cultural clash in my own teaching. Xiao (1999) explained that parental control and child conformity are an expected norm in the Taiwanese/Chinese society. Therefore, contemporary Taiwanese/Canadian parents have attached greater importance to the value of independence while still expecting the traditional value of obedience. As the result, these contradictory values coexist with varying degrees of comfort in the world of Taiwanese Canadians.

### **Private Music Teaching and Learning**

Proceeding from an understanding of the underlying cultural beliefs in the teaching and learning of Taiwanese Canadian private music lessons, I will next discuss the actual teaching and learning experiences, beginning with context of the private music lessons.

The activities revolving around private music lessons of Taiwanese Canadian included weekly lessons, recitals, music competitions and festivals, and music examinations. Students saw their private music teachers once each week from 30 minutes to 2 hours depending on the playing level and the subjects studied (e.g., a second instrument, theory and history lessons). The lessons took place either at the teacher's studio or at the student's home.

Among the five teacher participants, Lily taught both in her basement studio and at students' homes weekly. All of Lauren's students had lessons at her home studio. Sally, Patricia, and Frank organized student lessons according to geographical locations and drove door to door. Teaching at their home studios was most convenient for teachers. The



physical settings of their studios were similar: a grand piano was a must, and a chair was placed to the right of the piano bench for the teacher. During my observations I noticed that all piano teachers sat to the right of the piano whether they were right or left handed. One explanation may be that the piano is designed with the higher pitches on the right hand side, and our ears can identify higher pitches better than the low ones to the left of the keyboard. In my observations, I noted that piano teachers demonstrated or played along with students in the higher registers for better student comprehension. Other studio essentials included shelves that contained teaching materials such as music prints, history books, and music CDs; a desk for theory students; audio equipment such as a CD player and MD recorder to play examples for students or record students' performances; spare chairs for parents; and other accessories such as a metronome and a music stand.

The teachers who traveled to teach had to be flexible and adjust quickly to a changing teaching environment. The piano was usually in the living room of students' homes. Therefore, the ambience was not as private as that of a music studio. Family members walked in and out during lessons. Although the latter tried to keep quiet, occasional conversations could be heard in the background. In addition, teachers could not access teaching materials immediately. They either had to plan ahead and ask students to buy the music books, bring the teaching materials with them, or use whatever was available in students' homes (e.g., used books passed down from siblings).

Driving to students' homes one after another can be exhausting. Although teacher participants arranged their students to reduce travel time, Sally mentioned that she had to teach until 11 pm without any meal breaks. Patricia worried about her children while she traveled around to teach: "I am afraid that something will happen to my children while I am away. And I am always tired from the driving. These often affect my mood." It

seemed that teacher participants had a negative view about teaching in students' homes. If there was so much inconvenience, why did they choose to go to students home instead of teaching at a fixed location as do many of their colleagues?

Private music teachers teach at students' homes for one simple reason: they can get more students. Sally explained her situation:

I thought I could get more students this way. It was not easy to get students when I first began teaching, especially since I am in Richmond where there are many piano teachers. You can only get students to go to your studio when you are a well known teacher with an established reputation.

Sally's words about students going to teachers with a reputation are further reinforced by Patricia. As a new immigrant, Patricia had no teaching experience in Canada. In order to get more students, she traveled to students' homes. Over the years, Patricia gradually built up her reputation. Currently she teaches at home because students come to her asking for lessons. Lily also started teaching by going to students' homes during her university years. Although Lauren never traveled to teach, she slowly built up her name as a piano teacher. The teacher participants' private music teaching experiences are indeed like any other business. They start from the bottom and advertise themselves to get clients. Once they have built up a good reputation, clients come to them. How do these private music teachers advertise themselves? How do they obtain students?

Referrals were the most common way for teacher participants to get students. Lily began teaching when her schoolmate introduced a student to her. Lauren's mother referred a friend's child to Lauren. Although Sally, Frank, and Patricia began their teaching career by putting ads in a Chinese newspaper, most of their subsequent students came from referrals. Agreeing with teachers' statements, all parent participants said that they relied on friends' recommendations when they sought a private music teacher.

The working hours of private music teachers are flexible and irregular. Instead of

teaching during regular school hours, these private music teachers begin their teaching after school hours, usually working through the evening. Teachers like Sally and Patricia who go to students' homes arrive home at a late hour. Most teacher participants also teach on Saturdays and Sundays; it was a more convenient time for working parents to drive their children and for busy high school teenagers who did not have time for lessons on weekdays. The irregular private music teaching hours were inconvenient for the family members of the married private music teachers. Lily's husband, for example, prepared meals because Lily usually taught during dinner time. Both Patricia and Frank taught at students' houses; they had to arrange their schedule so that one of them could be at home with their young children while the other was out teaching. In addition, because teacher participants worked after school hours, they spent less time with their own children after school. Patricia explained her situation: "When my children need me the most, I am not around. Instead, I spend time with other people's children." This is a dilemma that the married female teacher participants faced. Without understanding and support from other family members, it is difficult to teach such irregular hours.

The lesson fees charged by my five teacher participants ranged from \$25 to \$55 per lesson. The fee is set according to the professional experience and educational level of the teacher. Some teachers charge differently according to students' playing level. All teacher participants believed that their lesson fees were reasonable. In fact, because Sally did not go through university music education and did not have as much performance experience as the others did, she had to charge less than her colleagues. She thought that her low lesson fee attracted parents with economic concerns: "They come to me because I am cheaper than others." Interestingly, all the teacher participants experienced bargaining with parents. "The parent wants me to give a discount because she sends three kids to

study with me,” Lauren stated. The teachers dealt with these requests in various ways. Some teachers acquiesced and allowed the discount. Some teachers did not budge. A pattern emerged. Students’ parents tended to bargain with novice teachers. After teachers gradually built up reputations, the bargaining disappeared. As Lily explained, students who came through referrals already knew about the fee before they called. They were less likely to ask or haggle about the money.

In addition to weekly lessons, recitals were another part of private music lessons. Annual recitals were mostly held in May/June before summer vacation and in December before the Christmas break. Churches, rented recital halls in music stores, and cafés were the places teacher participants held their recitals. The teachers were the main organizers of the events. They booked the venues, prepared student performances, put together a program, directed the event, and sometimes organized the reception afterwards. The primary purpose of recitals, according to the teacher participants, was to provide students who did not participate in examinations or music festivals with performing opportunities. Recitals also served as achievements report for students’ parents.

As there is currently no literature available about the context of Taiwanese Canadian private music lessons, I have used the research from the Western world as my references (Araújo, Santos, & Hentschke, 2009; Duke et al., 1997; Sosniak, 1985). After a comparison, I found that the context of Taiwanese Canadian private music lessons is similar to that of Western private music lessons. I will next discuss the Taiwanese Canadian private music teachers and their private music teaching experiences.

## **Theme 2. Removing Doubt**

The Confucian scholar, Yu Han (n.d.), from the Tang dynasty wrote this famous sentence in his article *Shi Shuo* [Sayings about Teachers]: “*Shi zhe, chuan dao, shou ye, jie huo zhe ye*” (p. 382). [Teachers are those who propagate doctrines, impart professional knowledge, and remove doubt.] This sentence summarized the role of the teacher and the purpose of teaching in my study. The student doubts in this case are the what, why, and how of private music learning. The beliefs and professional knowledge are the solutions to student doubts. In this section, I will explain the beliefs and professional knowledge and skills which are being propagated and how the teachers imparted the knowledge to remove students’ doubts. First, a context for the teachers is presented.

### **Who the Teachers Are**

All the private music teachers in this study were born in Taiwan and immigrated to Canada in 1992 (Lily, Lauren, and Sally) and 2002 (Patricia and Frank). Of the five teachers, Lauren and Sally came as teenagers and went through high school in Canada. Lily received her high school education in Taiwan and completed post secondary and degrees in Canada. Patricia and Frank spent the most time in the Taiwanese education system. They obtained high school and undergraduate educations in Taiwan and received their graduate degrees in the United States. All five teachers had performance backgrounds, a finding supported by the research (Campbell, 1991; Kennell, 2002; Nettl, 2002; Ward, 2004). Lily and Patricia were specifically trained in the Music Talent Program in their early years. All teacher participants received advanced music training at universities or colleges. The teacher participants’ educational levels might seem atypical because they all received higher education. However, as I discussed earlier,

Chinese/Taiwanese value academic achievement, and a higher level of education is believed to be the path to success (Chan, 1999). In fact, after talking to my classmates from the Music Talent Program in Taiwan and my music friends from UBC, I found that most of them had obtained at least a master's degree in either music education or music performance. It may be evident that acquiring a higher education degree is approaching a norm among the Taiwanese community.

As described previously, the teacher participants were from upper-middle class families. Their parents were highly involved in a variety of musical activities as amateurs. As the research indicates (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002; Duke, Flowers, & Wolfe, 1997; Sosniak, 1985), parents who have had positive musical experience tend to play a key role in their children's musical development. For example, Lily indicated that the reason she started piano lessons was that her mother also played piano. Lauren's mother sang in a choir. Lauren always went to choir rehearsals with her mother and listened to people singing when she was young. Sally's parents loved singing Karaoke as a hobby. Sally might have picked up her love of singing from her parents. Patricia's mother listened to classical music extensively while Patricia played. In addition to listening, she told music stories to young Patricia. Although Frank did not remember his parents being involved in any particular music experiences, he was musically influenced by his sister while listening to his sister practice. Furthermore, his parents had provided their children with individual audio devices so they could listen to music when they wanted. High music achievers like the teacher participants in this study seem to come from families where parents enjoyed and supported musical activities in their daily lives, a conclusion supported by Davidson et al. (1996), Orsmond and Miller (1999), and Sosniak (1985).

Like their students, all teacher participants except Frank had an early start at private

music lessons. It was at age 4 that most teacher participants began their piano lessons; the exception was Frank who started to take trumpet lessons at 15. The teacher participants also took other instruments as they progressed in their musical learning. Lily studied flute; Lauren played *Er-hu* (Chinese fiddle) and clarinet; Patricia played violin and *Er-hu*; and Frank took group keyboard class in university. Sally was the only one who did not play a second instrument. The teacher and student participants' experiences supports Jørgensen's (2001) finding that the starting time for piano and strings is earlier than that for woodwinds and brass. Teacher participants' stories also revealed that the private music students are more likely to become professional musicians when they begin their music lessons early.

Besides private music lessons, the teacher participants were enthusiastically involved in school music activities during their elementary and high school years. It was mandatory for Patricia and Lily to participate in large music ensembles after they entered the Music Talent Program in Taiwan. However, both Patricia and Lily had choral experiences before entering the program. Lily was in the school choir that represented the school at competitions, while Patricia sang in a well known children's choir outside school. Before moving to Canada, Lauren was in the school Chinese ensemble, and Sally participated in the school rhythm band. High school memories in Canada for Lauren and Sally were still related to music. Sally sang and played piano as an accompanist for the school choir; Lauren participated in both choir and band. Although Frank did not have as much musical experience as other teachers, he joined the school band when he began learning trumpet and French horn. Summing up, the teacher participants demonstrated a broad interest in music even before they started their professional music training at universities or colleges.

Unlike performer musicians whose personality traits are usually introverted because they engage in more private activities such as practicing alone and immersing themselves in music (Kemp & Mills, 2002), music teachers in general are more extroverted because they are consistently interacting with students and parents (Wubbenhorst, 1994).

However, private music teachers combine introversion with extroversion. Because of their teaching environment, private music teachers deal with people individually. There is no school administration above them. They are not obligated to attend meetings and go to conferences during professional days as do school music teachers. They do not grade. They do not deal with 50 parents at parent nights nor must they calm 70 teenagers during choir and band rehearsals. Private music teachers usually teach one-on-one. Even when they teach group lessons, the group is small. They are their own bosses. They work according to their own schedule and teach their own curriculum. There is a reason why the research of private music teaching and learning has not been undertaken until recently: “Practitioners in studio teaching simply do not trust or value knowledge generated from systematic research” (Kennell, 2002, p. 253). “Uncomfortable for you to watch me” and “I have no time” were the two common refusals when I was searching for participants.

Differing from the many teachers who refused to be part of my research, the five teacher participants were open and outgoing. They were not afraid of sharing their experiences. Lily and Lauren had completed Masters of Music Education. Patricia had obtained a Doctor of Musical Arts. Both Lily and Lauren indicated that their view of research changed as a result of higher education; they were aware of the importance of the systematic research. Frank and Sally loved helping out by sharing their experiences. Furthermore, all five participants were not surprisingly interested in the research topic. Their desire to understand more about the field of private music teaching and learning



prompted them to say yes.

### **Bringing out the Best**

Teachers have the potential to bring the best out of their students. A mentor can have a significant impact on their pupils' lives: "Mentoring is a mutuality that requires more than meeting the right teacher: the teacher must meet the right student" (Palmer, 1998, p. 21). But how do students define the "right" teacher?

Teacher characteristics and behaviors play an important factor in student motivation, especially for beginning students (Davidson et al., 1998; Gembris & Davidson, 2002). From the descriptions of both teacher and student participants, I found that negative private music learning experiences are usually related to teachers' personalities and attitudes toward teaching. Lily remembered her first piano teacher as a "strict" person. Her brother could not take the teacher's "meanness" and therefore quit. Lauren's first piano teacher had a "bad attitude" and compared her with other students. Her motivation to practice decreased after hearing her teacher's frequent complaints. Instead of interpreting their first teacher's "strictness" as high expectations, Lily and Lauren both had negative memories about their beginning piano teacher when they were young. Agreeing with Sosniak (1985), Lily and Lauren's examples served as an indication that beginning or young students tend to prefer teachers who are affectionate.

There was a relationship between the teacher participants' personality and the level of students they taught. Among the five teacher participants, Lauren, and Sally displayed a warm, sweet natured personality. They taught mostly young, beginning, and early intermediate students. The more experienced Lily and Patricia, though still full of personal warmth, were more serious when they taught. They accepted more piano

students who were beyond the intermediate level. As Davidson et al. (1998) found, the relationship between teacher personality, student playing level, and student age suggests that personal warmth is more important for young children and beginning students whereas older and more advanced students are able to distinguish personality from ability and require more competent teachers.

Lastly, when asked to describe their ideal teacher, the student participants' answers matched researchers' definitions of an effective teacher (Costa-Giomi, Flowers, & Sasaki 2005; Davidson et al., 1998; Gembris & Davidson, 2002). Using their words in summary, a good teacher must listen and talk to students. S/he cares about students' feelings and is always encouraging. A good teacher has a warm, attentive, humorous, and friendly personality. Furthermore, a good music teacher does not only give interesting lessons but also demonstrates good musical knowledge and technical ability to bring out the best in students.

### **Lessons for Enjoyment**

According to Reimer (2003), a philosophy of music teaching gives “grounding for our professional lives, both in explaining our value as a field and in giving direction to our actions” (p. 1). As there is currently no research literature that addresses the philosophical views of private music teachers, I was interested in knowing about the teaching beliefs of my teacher participants.

Most teacher participants thought that the purpose of music education is to bring an enjoyment of music into students' lives. Through the teaching of the performance techniques, music theory, and other necessary knowledge to interpret music, private music teachers are nurturing a skill as well as a life-long interest. It seems that the teacher

participants' teaching philosophies were based on the utilitarian values described by Reimer (2003). Lauren believes that music education helps to cultivate children's moral character as well as foster a desirable temperament. Sally thinks that music fosters one's patience and helps release stress. Patricia said that music helps to train children's persistence and consistency. The teacher participants' beliefs coincide with Elliot's (1995) idea that the primary purpose of music making is for self-growth and self-knowledge. Rather than describing a philosophy, the teacher participants identified advocacy issues surrounding music teaching. The values that teacher participants identified were, however, as Reimer pointed out: "[W]ithout a clear sense of the special values of music, and the pursuit of them as our primary professional obligation, we are left with no foundation for our presence in education" (p. 65).

As Lily and Patricia were specifically trained in the Music Talent Program, I wanted to know if their teaching philosophies differed from those of the other teachers. Patricia shared an interesting view when asked about the purpose of music teaching. She had spent her entire life in an environment steeped in music, obeying and accepting her mother's plan about music study. From the time she entered the Music Talent Program, her destiny was to become a musician. "Learning, teaching, and performing music have become part of my life, like eating and drinking" said Patricia. She had not given much thought to the values of music before giving birth to her children. Patricia's response paralleled Reimer's (2003) words that many music educators are unaware of the philosophical meaning of their profession (p. 9).

Lily was the only one who stated a clear teaching belief. Her belief was similar to Suzuki's philosophy that musical ability is nurtured rather than inherited. Although she was educated in the Music Talent Program, which emphasized talent, she thinks that

everyone is able to do music given the proper training: “My experiences in the master of music education program have reinforced my belief that music is for everyone. It is not a subject for a select few.” As Reimer (1989) described, formalist assumptions encourage teaching the talented few, so that in the Music Talent Program, music education focused on performance programs for the obviously able with less given to general music programs for the rest. Duke et al. (1997) pointed out that although people advocate “music is for every child,” many piano teachers in United States believe that musical study is for the musically talented. This view also prevails in Taiwan. As a product of the Talent Program, Lily stated a need to balance her teaching.

To conclude, the teacher participants’ valuing of music teaching forms the basis of their teaching philosophy. Elliot’s (1995) words summarize the philosophy presented by the teacher participants:

Music education is not merely desirable but essential to the full development of every student because the primary values of music and music education overlap the essential life values that most individuals and societies pursue for the good of each and all: personal growth, differentiation, complexity, enjoyment, self-esteem, and happiness. (p. 130)

## **Teaching Styles**

Pratt and Associates (1998) explained that a teaching perspective is “an interrelated set of beliefs and intentions which give meaning and justification for our actions.” Gumm (1991) proposed that personal learning experiences, knowledge of music and music teaching and learning, philosophical beliefs in music education, and personality traits are the elements that contribute to a teacher’s teaching style. As only a few studies have examined the teaching styles of private music teachers, I based my analysis on Pratt and Associates’ (1998) five teaching perspectives (Figure 10.1) and Gumm’s (1991) eight dimensions of music teaching style (Figure 10.2). Pratt and Associates’ five teaching

perspectives provided a solid and comprehensive model of teaching perspectives for teaching adults. On the other hand, music teaching is a specialized area that should be studied in more detail. Therefore, in addition to the teaching perspectives, I also looked at the teacher participants' teaching behaviors and compared them to Gumm's eight dimensions of teaching styles. The teaching perspectives are the beliefs behind teachers' intentions and actions while the dimensions are the actual application of the teaching.

Among the five teacher participants, Frank's teaching perspective was the easiest to identify. As he taught solely music history and theory, there were no performing aspects in his lessons. His teaching behaviors represented Gumm's (1991) Music Concept Learning dimension in which the music concepts of theory or history are the focus of the lesson. As earlier described, Frank employs the traditional "spoon-fed" teaching style which is similar to Pratt and Associates' (1998) Transmission perspective. Transmission teaching emphasizes the effective presentation of content to the learners. Knowledge and skills are viewed as objects that can be imparted and transmitted from teacher to student. In this case, contradicting the theme of teacher's responsibility to remove students' doubts, the teacher decides what the student doubts. The content is the presumed answer for student doubts. Frank's words clearly expressed this approach: "I need to do everything to make my students swallow all the information that I give them. The important thing is that they learn and understand." Although Transmission teachers recognize that students' individuality affects their learning, students' personal issues are placed second to efficient course delivery. When I asked if Frank remained in contact with his past students, he said: "I don't know. And I don't care." He did not interest himself in his students after his job was done. The teachers in this teaching perspective consider themselves experts in what they teach. Frank had great confidence in his

teaching specialty. His response to reading professional literature demonstrated his perceived his confidence: “I don’t read them. I know that these articles are available but I don’t need them.” In order to preserve this confidence, “transmission teachers do not have to become involved in areas beyond their competence. Especially in formal settings, there are other experts whose role it is to deal with individual difficulties” (p. 63). Frank’s low interest in teaching counterpoint is an example of this attitude.

Figure 10-1 Pratt and Associates' (1998) Five Teaching Perspectives:

Teaching Perspectives	Teacher	Learners	Content	Context	Ideals
<b>Transmission-</b> The purpose of teaching is to effectively transmit knowledge and skills to students from a content expert (teacher or text). This is a teacher-centered approach (pp. 57-82).	Teachers are experts. Their job is to efficiently deliver the content to the students.	The focus of the learning is on learning the content. Personal student issues are placed second to efficient course delivery.	The presentation of subject matter is well-organized and easily structured. Knowledge or skill is broken into small segments, structured, and delivered to learners within an allocated course time.	Large formal institutional settings such as universities, colleges, and industrial training centers are mostly likely to foster a transmission teaching environment	Teachers assume the ideology of their employer, unless the subject matter being taught is related to "creating a better society."
<b>Apprenticeship-</b> The purpose of teaching is to enculturate learners into a specific community (pp. 83-103).	Teachers are master practitioners who model real life practice. They are an extension of the values and knowledge in their community of practice. Their job is to bring the students into the specific community.	The focus of learning is to learn through observing teachers, practicing with teacher's assistance, and eventually becoming independent in practice.	Teachers and content are fused as one.	The context is the community of practice. Community can be a family, a trade or vocation, a profession, or a cultural group.	N/A
<b>Developmental –</b> The purpose of teaching is to cultivate students' ways of thinking. This is a student centered approach (pp. 105-149).	Teachers are responsible for building a bridge between the learners' present ways of thinking and more desirable	The focus of learning is to develop new knowledge, skills, or attitude based on the existing cognitive structures and revising or	Content is the medium through which preferred ways of thinking are developed.	Dominant in the North American science education	N/A

	ways of thinking within the area of practice. Their job is to help learners think like experts in the area of learning.	replacing those structures.			
<b>Nurturing-</b> The purpose of teaching is to facilitate self-efficacy (pp. 151-172).	Teachers help nurture their students' self confidence	Learning is affected by a learner's self-concept and self-efficacy. Learners must be confident about their learning.	Content is the means through which individuals achieve their goals and build up confidence.	Variations of this perspective are found in Singapore, China, Hong Kong, U.S. and Canada.	N/A
<b>Social Reform-</b> The purpose of teaching is to seek a better society (pp. 173-199).	Teachers are teaching ideals to their students in order to achieve a better society.	Learners are overshadowed by ideals.	Content is secondary to the ideal.	The focus is on the collective —society.	The ideology is based on a core or central system of beliefs that strive for a better society.



Figure 10-2 Gumm's (1991) Eight Dimensions of Music Teaching Styles

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Most representative teaching behaviours</b>
Student Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach students to define and compare how they feel about music.</li> <li>• Help students rate and characterize how they feel about music.</li> <li>• Ask students what is important to them.</li> <li>• Encourage students to be creative and imaginative in the class.</li> <li>• Use discussion and dialogue (instead of one-way lecturing) (p. 96).</li> </ul>
Teacher Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbally demand sharp attention to tasks.</li> <li>• Communicate an awareness of student behaviour.</li> <li>• Monitor student behaviour closely.</li> <li>• Communicate that students should carry out the teacher's decisions (p. 98).</li> </ul>
Positive Learning Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify information that students are uncertain about.</li> <li>• Allow for complete answers by students after you ask a question.</li> <li>• Be sensitive and accommodate to student fatigue or frustration.</li> <li>• Support and care about students' opinions and feelings.</li> <li>• Praise students whenever you see them do a good job (p. 99).</li> </ul>
Time Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to accomplish several things at a time.</li> <li>• Try to get as many things done within the rehearsal period as possible.</li> <li>• Require students to act quickly to your directions or questions (p. 100).</li> </ul>
Nonverbal Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use facial expression as a primary way to communicate with students.</li> <li>• Use eye contact as a nonverbal way to communicate to students.</li> <li>• Purposefully change the pace of activities in class.</li> <li>• Use body stance or body movement as a primary way to communicate to students (p. 101).</li> </ul>
Aesthetic Music Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe musical events by comparing them to kinesthetic terms (energy, growth, gravity, or specific</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>movements).</li> <li>Describe musical events by comparing them to visual terms (color, shape, size, or more specific objects).</li> <li>Describe musical events by comparing them to feelingful terms (angry, gentle, peaceful).</li> <li>Teaching performance skills through use of physical manipulation (flopping, bending, raising).</li> <li>Have discussions with students about the musical sound images in their memory (p. 103).</li> </ul>
Group Dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have students separately rehearse the music in groups (sections, quartets...).</li> <li>Have students working separately on music (on their own).</li> <li>Have students in small groups discussing the music.</li> <li>Have individuals or small groups perform for their peers.</li> <li>Allow an individual student to make presentations or lead the rehearsal (p. 104).</li> </ul>
Music Concept Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask questions requiring students to recall or recognize musical terms and facts.</li> <li>Ask students to diagnose problems in their own rehearsal performance.</li> <li>Teach music concepts of theory or history.</li> <li>Ask questions requiring students to choose a rule of music that applies to particular situations.</li> <li>Ask questions requiring students to draw comparisons between different musical examples (p. 105).</li> </ul>

Note: The teaching behaviours presented above are the ones most evident in my study. More teaching behaviours listed under each dimension can be found on pp. 167 -171 of Gumm's research.

As the goal of the transmission teaching is to properly present the content, the presentation of the subject matter must be well organized and easily structured (Pratt & Associates, 1998). Frank chose his teaching materials for music theory and history according to the organization of the text: “Choosing the right text book is important. Take the book of Barbara Mackin for example, the 17 chapters in the book are well organized and edited. [I plan my lessons] according to the order of the chapters.” Frank identified the goal of his teaching as having his students pass the theory requirements of RCM examinations; he needed to cram in all the information into students’ brain in a short time. Furthermore, although Frank expressed a negative view about his learning in Taiwan, his teaching perspective was directly influenced by the way he had learned. Pratt and Associates explained this phenomenon:

Part of the reason for this perspective’s popularity — and notoriety — can be attributed to its extensive use within public schools and other institutional settings. It is understandable that if, first as children and then adults, we experienced transmission teaching throughout our formal education, we would then embrace it as a perspectives on teaching for ourselves when we become teachers. And when we now find ourselves in teaching positions but lack other teaching perspectives with which to compare and contrast, we draw on this perspective since it is the only one with which we have familiarity. Since we have experienced its use extensively, or perhaps exclusively, it becomes a part of our perspective of what it means to teach. (p. 60)

The second teaching perspective that surfaced in this study was Apprenticeship. In a traditional apprenticeship, knowledge and skills are learned through observation, modeling, scaffolding, and coaching (Pratt & Associates, 1998). Lily and Patricia both taught from this perspective. Lily and Patricia’s teaching behaviors were similar — a possible consequence of their experiences in the Music Talent Program. Their teaching showed strong characteristics from the dimensions of Aesthetic Music Performance and Music Concept Learning. According to Gumm (1991), an Aesthetic Music Performance teacher guides students to compare musical examples with kinesthetic, visual, and

feelingful terms: “The beauty of the music is brought out through the translation and manipulation of students’ musical thought and action” (p. 102). During her lessons, Lily demonstrated music examples and asked Heather to think about and describe the differences. Musical expression was highly emphasized in both Lily and Patricia’s lessons. Lily’s use of Monet’s painting to describe impressionism and Patricia’s hanging of music related paintings and crafts on her studio walls are examples of teaching students to compare musical and visual events. The teaching characteristics from the dimension of Music Concept Learning included asking students to recognize musical terms (Patricia), asking students to diagnose their own performance (Lily), requiring students to compare music examples (Lily and Patricia), and asking questions such as when to use crescendo that require students to choose a rule of music that applies to particular situations (Lily and Patricia). If “how do we learn music” refers to student doubt, stressing the conceptual aspects of music learning while still trying to develop students’ ability to create an aesthetic music experience are Lily and Patricia’s answers to removing student doubts. These two teacher participants’ teaching behaviors showed the strong influence of their rigorous musical training in the past.

Lauren also expressed the Aesthetic Music Performance teaching traits mentioned above. In addition, her musical teaching style portrayed the dimension of a Positive Learning Environment. This dimension emphasizes that learning should occur in a positive manner: “The teacher sets a positive mood, attempts to be clear, allows time to assure clarity, and offers positive feedback contingent on student learning” (Gumm, 1991, p. 99). Teachers in this dimension are sensitive to student frustration and care about student feelings. These descriptions suitably fit Lauren’s words: “I don’t like to push.” She believes that when the students are learning in a positive environment, the motivation

to learn will increase. The perspective behind Lauren's teaching is the Nurturing Perspective, where the purpose of teaching is to facilitate student's self-efficacy (Pratt and Associates, 1998). Students must be confident about their learning. In this case, student doubt is removed by having a positive learning experience. Lauren's words contradict the previously discussed cultural value of obeying authority. Lauren talked about her unpleasant experience of being pushed as a student. She did not want her students to be treated in the same way. Therefore, moving away from the tradition, Lauren's teaching style showed the most traits of a student-centered approach among the five teacher participants. Evidently, Lauren's example once again revealed that personal experience is one critical contributor to a teacher's teaching style.

Sally teaches from the Transmission Perspective, which features the dimensions of Teacher Authority, Time Efficiency, and Music Concept Learning. From a pure Transmission Perspective which emphasizes presenting content, Teacher Authority presents "the teacher's attempt to assert and maintain their controlling role in the music classroom (Gumm, 1991, p. 97). This dimension is the closest music teaching dimension to traditional Chinese/Taiwanese teaching in which students obey teachers' decisions and follow the goals set by their teachers. Sally spoke in a tone that demanded sharp attention to tasks. She wrote elaborately on students' notebook to communicate that students should carry out her decisions. These are all examples of teaching behaviors in the Teacher Authority dimension. In addition, Sally often expected Jack to give her quick answers. She also mentioned that she tried to cover all her materials within the lesson time. And Sally "confused herself" by trying to accomplish several things at one time. These teaching behaviors all suggest the Time Efficiency dimension. Total teacher control in both time and classroom interaction was Sally's solution to removing student doubt.

## Teaching Strategies

As described earlier, most teacher participants used an Apprenticeship approach. Apprenticeship is similar to a parent and child relationship. Like parents who raise children in their own unique ways, private music teachers have their own teaching approaches. Teaching strategies are the procedures carried out by teachers in order to remove student doubt. Some of the teaching strategies were shared among the teacher participants; some varied.

The teaching strategies observed in this study have been identified in the literature (Ward, 2004). The Confucius quotation at the beginning of the chapter stresses that wisdom is obtained through imitation, experience, and reflection. The wisdom of how to teach is obtained in a similar way. First, the teacher participants learned to teach by imitation; they taught as they were taught. The teachers indicated that the following teaching strategies were influenced by their own private music teachers: the use of materials, musical interpretations, and rewards; lesson organization, performance technique, and practice strategies; and attitudes towards music. “Of course you only teach the stuff that you have learned and are familiar with,” Lily explained. Patricia added: “You preserve what you feel good about your teacher’s teaching and pass that on to your students.” Secondly, the teachers developed their teaching strategies through their own past teaching experiences. Lily had learned to divide the lesson time effectively over her years of her teaching. Like all the other learning, the teachers learned to teach by trial and error. Thirdly, the teaching strategies came from their desire to solve students’ problems. Lauren looked for ways to ear train her students when they could not identify intervals. Lily developed methods to help her flute students maintain good air support for the right sound quality. The teacher participants all claimed that they “develop their own teaching

ideas” in order to “make things work.” Lastly, the teacher participants acquired their teaching ideas from reading professional literature such as method books, newsletters, and journals. “I always get interesting ideas from the method books,” Sally stated. Lily also indicated that she had more ideas about teaching and learning once she started to read and reflect on music educational journals. None of the teacher participants mentioned that they obtained their teaching strategies from attending professional workshops.

None of the teacher participants teach according to a written lesson plan, corresponding with Haddon’s (2009) finding about the planning strategies of private music teachers. Lesson planning is one teaching strategy taught to music education majors in university method classes (M. Schmidt, 2005). However, it seemed that the teacher participants had never been introduced to this idea when they were music students. Instead of a written plan, the teacher participants directed their lessons towards their students’ goals such as passing a certain RCM grade examination, advancing to the next method book level, and attending a particular music festival. Although the teacher participants did not follow a particular lesson plan, they organized their lessons in a similar pattern: technique, studies/etudes, repertoire, and ear training/sight-reading or music theory—at least as a stated ideal. Teachers had different sequences of the latter events, but the content, however, remained similar.

As the research supports (Colprit, 2000; Duke & Simmons, 2006; Gholoson, 1998; Kennell, 2002; Pratt & Associates, 1998; Wiggins, 2001), the teacher participants unconsciously applied Vygotsky’s scaffolding theory in their lessons (Vygotsky, 1934). They taught according to students’ zone of proximal development. They discovered the students’ problems (e.g., Lily found the wrong chord Heather was playing). They

diagnosed the students' problems next (Lily hypothesized that Heather kept playing the wrong chord because she used the wrong fingering). After the problems were identified and diagnosed, the teacher participants assisted students with solving their problems (Lily marked down the correct fingering patterns on the music and demonstrated them on the piano). And finally, the teachers stepped away and let students work and learn on their own (Heather played the chord progression until she played it correctly). Colprit (2000) calls this strategy of applying scaffolding theory a rehearsal frame. The frame begins when the teacher identifies the problem and ends when the problem is solved or another new problem is found. The teacher participants consistently applied this strategy in their lessons. According to Heather and Lily, they learned this rehearsal frame from observing their own private music teachers.

In summary, the teaching styles and strategies were mainly developed from and based on the past learning and teaching experiences of the teacher participants. Nevertheless, most teacher participants continued to develop their professional knowledge after they became teachers.

### **Professional Development**

The teacher participants in this study started teaching either in their junior years of university or immediately after they graduated with bachelor degrees in music. Unlike school music teachers, private music teachers receive less professional information once they leave school because they act individually. According to Mullins (1998), it is music teachers' responsibility to remain active in their profession:

Music teachers should make every effort to keep themselves active professionally. Stay aware of opportunities and innovations in the music field by joining professional organizations, subscribing to periodicals, and attending conventions, clinics and workshops. Keep performing at a professional level by continuing to study. Practice and play in public. (p. 86)



Among the activities listed above, going to graduate school was a common path for the teacher participants who chose to pursue further music studies or improve their teaching skills.

After teaching music privately for a few years, both Lily and Lauren went back to UBC for a Master of Music Education degree. The courses in the master's program focused on school music education so it did not directly meet the pedagogical needs of piano teaching for Lily and Lauren. Instead, higher education broadened their thinking: "My thinking changed. I started to relate the knowledge I learned from the courses to my own teaching" (Lauren). The research methods taught from the graduate program also opened a door for the teachers: "I didn't know that there are [journal] papers like these out there. Now that I know where to look for information, I search for the topics that I am interested in.... The reading more or less affects my thinking" (Lily). The changes in Lily and Lauren's thinking once again revealed the cultural differences in education. Confucianism states that it is the teachers' responsibility to remove doubts for students. Lily and Lauren came from a background where they were used to being told and they obeyed; memorization was the main way to become familiar with the learning materials in school (Pratt et al., 1999). On the contrary, instead of removing doubts *for* students, Western education encourages students to find their own answers. Teachers are there to assist students by giving general directions (Wong, 2004). The fact that both Lily and Lauren started to relate their reading and applied what they had learned from the graduate program and even noticed the differences showed that they have become more independent in their thinking after the graduate program.

Unlike Lily and Lauren who did their master's degrees in music education, Patricia and Frank continued their graduate studies in music performance. They stated that their

supervisors (i.e., private music teachers) were the ones who most influenced them. Frank said: “It’s not the degree that helped my teaching. It’s the teachers who influenced me greatly.” Patricia further explained: “The most important gain is the impact that my teachers had on me.... I gained teaching strategies and built a lot of repertoire.” Patricia and Frank’s words add credence to Ward’s (2004) finding that they tended to teach as they were taught, reinforcing the powerful impact of modeling and apprenticeship.

Reading is another way to get new ideas. Going to school seems to motivate teachers to read. Lily and Lauren indicated that they began reading professional journals and books after they entered graduate school. Patricia also said that she read more when she was doing her doctoral degree. Besides professional books and magazines, Sally founds new ideas by going through method books. Newsletters from the Royal Conservatory of Music were another source that all the teacher participants read.

Attending professional workshops and conferences was yet another way to help teachers’ self improvement. Teacher participants indicated that they attended workshops held by the RCM or music stores when time permitted. The teacher participants, however, expressed that they were busy most of the time, and it was difficult to fit the workshops into their schedules: “I want to go. But the timing is always not right,” Sally said. “I just can’t find time to go,” added Patricia. Furthermore, Lauren described that many workshops seemed to be organized for commercial purposes: “The workshops are okay. I went to one that was supposed to talk about how to choose and maintain pianos. But it turned out the organizer of the workshop was trying to sell his pianos. Another time it was an accountant talking about how to prepare taxes.”

None of the teacher participants had joined any music teachers’ associations; the large annual membership fee was one of the reasons. Based on her friends’ experience,

Lily did not think joining the association would benefit her career: “I don’t need it to get students. It’s a waste of money.” Lauren, Patricia, and Frank did not know much about any associations so they wondered how the association would benefit them. Sally wanted to join but she was too busy to send in the documents. The teachers’ responses revealed that these Taiwanese Canadian private music teachers are isolated and often teach without a support system. Recruiters of music teachers’ association might need to develop strategies of reaching out to these teachers to make them aware of the importance of joining a support group. These participants also did not mention collaborating with other private music teachers.

Lastly, the teachers continued to grow as performing musicians once they left school. Lauren continued to take private music lessons as an adult student. Lily, Patricia, and Frank were actively involved in concerts and recitals. And Sally performed in cafés.

I have talked about different areas related to the professional lives of private music teachers in the above sections and proceed to communication.

## **Communication**

The research has indicated that teacher verbal communication takes up the majority of time in the private music lessons (Colprit, 2000; Duke, 1999; Speer, 1994; West & Rostvall, 2003). My research supports West and Rostvall’s (2003) findings about teacher talk; teacher talk dominated the studio music teaching of my Taiwanese Canadian participants. I observed the following examples of teacher verbalization: testing/inquiring (e.g., testing students about the definition of a harmonic minor scale), accompanying student performance (e.g., counting to give a steady beat), giving directives/instructing (e.g., telling students what to do), giving information (e.g., explaining the whole and half

steps in a scale), analyzing (e.g., talking about the phrasing and shaping of a melody), using analogies (e.g., story to explain parallel motion), and providing positive and negative feedback (e.g., praising or pointing out a wrong note).

Corresponding to research by Benson and Fung (2004), giving directives and instructions occupied most of the private lesson time. Although all teacher participants talked as if they have adopted a Western approach in their teaching, traditional values can be still seen in their teaching. Because teachers are authority figures who propagate values, impart knowledge, and remove doubts for students, students must respect teachers by showing their obedience. As a result, challenging teachers is avoided; the student participants rarely talked during the lessons. They communicated with their teachers by obeying their instructions. The only exception occurred when Lily asked Heather to compare music examples and Heather gave her ideas. Student participants rarely asked questions.

I observed both positive and negative feedback. I found more positive than negative feedback, possibly a Confucian influence, with teachers trying to preserve harmony and save students' face. When negative feedback was given, it directly addressed specific musical performance effects, as Duke and Simmons (2006) also found.

As in Duke's (1999) study, my teacher participants demonstrated for and asked more questions of younger students. They used different vocabulary to ensure that younger students understood. I also found that more positive feedback was offered to younger students; general unspecific encouragement like "good!" often followed a student performance. On the other hand, the instructions given to older students were more

concise and to the point. More technical feedback was provided to older students. In addition, positive feedback tended to be more specific for older and more advanced students, for example, “I like your tempo” or “I like your tone color.”

Metaphors and analogies were used to present a musical idea or painting an image to assist interpretation. They were, however, used infrequently during the lessons, in agreement with Benson and Fung’s (2004) finding.

Because the teachers were the authority, they tended to talk in a polite and emotionless manner. Student participants were accustomed to obeying. They were able to interpret the functions of teacher verbalization and responded immediately and appropriately to meet their teachers’ expectations.

The non-verbal communication found in the private music lessons of Taiwanese Canadian in this study included teacher modeling, student performance, and interactive behaviors. Teacher modeling can be further divided into instrumental modeling and the use of singing as a modeling medium.

As all teacher participants except Frank were piano teachers, piano was used for instrumental modeling. Modeling is an effective way to demonstrate both playing technique and musical interpretation (Woody, 2000). Teacher participants played to demonstrate new pieces, phrasing, tone color, rhythmic patterns, pitches, and style. They demonstrated and exaggerated the identified problems to help students learn. They also played with students to accompany and guide them through repeated practice. Besides piano playing, I also observed the use of body instruments. Teacher participants clapped to show rhythm or keep the beat. In addition, body movements such as conducting with their hands or moving their body to express phrases were all forms of non-verbal modeling observed in the teacher participants’ studios.

A second form of teacher demonstration was the use of singing. Consistent with Rose and Buell's (1998) study, singing was used by teacher participants to model pitch, articulation, timing, rhythmic patterns, phrasing, contrasting versions, and musical interpretation. Singing was also applied when identifying problems and demonstrating alternatives, thus providing immediate feedback usually during student performance. The singing consisted of non-verbal syllables. Teacher participants either hummed the melody or sang in solfège. In these ways, singing was equivalent to instrumental modeling.

Unlike instrumental modeling which was usually imitated by students on their instruments, the students did not sing after their teachers. Instead, teacher singing was followed by instrumental performance. Student singing behaviors were neither encouraged nor observed during the lessons. Most teacher participants indicated that they had received choral education in elementary school. Choir and sight singing were two mandatory subjects taught in the Music Talent Program. It is also a cultural phenomenon that Taiwanese people enjoy singing Karaoke as a leisure activity. Therefore, singing was a familiar activity for most teacher participants. Why was singing not being used by students in the private music lessons?

Singing helps students feel and understand the shape of a melody. When Jiao (2007) interviewed 50 pianists around the world, pianist like Jacques Rouvier said that he always made his students sing in his private music lessons: "Human voice is the foundation of all instruments. Nevertheless, music cannot be separated from singing" (p.41). Similar to Rose and Buell's (1998) finding, although the teacher participants unconsciously applied singing in their lessons, they did not think of themselves as singers. "It would be a big problem for me if you asked me to sing," Patricia once said jokingly. It might also be that the teacher participants were not taught to sing when they took private music lessons.

Perhaps that is why they did not think of using singing for ear training or sight-reading with their students. So the answer to why singing was not encouraged in the private music lessons I observed is simple: the teachers teach as they were taught, and singing wasn't introduced as part of the lessons when they were students.

Because of the camera angle, I was unfortunately unable to have a clear view of the participants' facial expressions. I sometimes had a problem seeing their body movement because of the limited space. I was only able to infer their behavior from the volume and modulation of their voices. Both teacher and student participants used medium loud voices when they spoke to each other. The teacher participants tended to use a louder voice when they were speaking while students played. They also adjusted their speech and singing voice when they were addressing an interpretation issue. The modulation of the voice was generally even, but teacher participants occasionally raised their voices to give a warning or show disapproval. Their tone became warmer when giving specific encouragement. Other than that, the interactions between teacher and student tended to be polite and focus on the practical aspects of playing.

In conclusion, both verbal communication and non-verbal communication were initiated by the teachers. Student performance was the only time that students became more active. Nevertheless, verbal and non-verbal communication were the methods which teachers consciously or unconsciously applied to transfer knowledge and skills to students. It is through these verbal and non-verbal behaviors that teacher participants were able to communicate with students and moreover remove students' doubts.

## **The Western Canon**

Musicians, along with the general public, always describe taking private music lessons as “taking piano lessons” or “taking violin lessons.” The word “piano” or “violin” is emphasized. This implies that the focus of the private music lessons is on learning to play an instrument. When asked about their motivation to start music lessons, acquiring an “ability” and nurturing a “lifelong skill” were the reasons which teacher, parent, and student participants identified. Taking these ideas together, these words convey that instead of focusing on the aesthetic aspects of music (the music itself) or on social roles, the participants viewed their instrumental lessons more from a technical perspective. The private music lessons I observed were piano lessons. Rather than the oral approach which is favored by the jazz or rock music teachers, music in these piano lessons means notated music, which promotes the importance of the ability to read the music (Nettl, 1995). An emphasis on technique dominates private music lessons (see also Young et al., 2003). Regelski (2009) critiques instrumental lessons: “Disciplined practice of technique, music reading, and literature from instrumental methods books, and a focus on the next concert are the norms for performance instruction” (p.71).

Similar to Nettl (1995) and Regelski’s (2009) conclusions, teacher participants emphasized Western art music when choosing repertoire. Formed during their own music education, the teacher participants’ personal music preferences were classically oriented, and the music taught was mostly works from the Western canon. Although Lauren and Sally claimed that they taught selections from popular and movie music, I heard none during my observations. I was interested in students’ musical preferences as they were playing mostly classical repertoire. I found that the older and more advanced students expressed stronger musical preferences than younger or beginning students. Heather, Judy,



and Natalie both stated that they liked classical music. Influenced by media and peers, Heather and Judy had also learned to appreciate popular music. The older students were able to describe and identify the music styles they preferred. On the other hand, perhaps because they had not yet acquired enough music vocabulary, Jack and Leo only gave vague answers such as liking “piano music” or “jazz music” when asked about their musical preferences.

According to Cooper (2001) and Siebenaler (1997), the choice of music in private music lessons affects student motivation. The teacher participants chose repertoire according to students’ learning goals, playing level, personality, areas of interest, and the areas that needed improvement — but from the Western canon. The choice of music repertoire is a subject that is extensively discussed during the meetings of registered private music teachers. However, the repertoire being discussed often focuses on Western art music such as new works by Canadian composers or the new examination syllabus. There are occasional workshops on the improvisation of jazz chords. The emphasis, however, is still on the teaching of notated music instead of an oral approach.

The teacher participants tended to start beginners in method books. When students or parents expressed an interest in taking a music examination, the teachers switched their students to the RCM system. All the teacher participants used the piano and theory syllabus from RCM. The reason for using the syllabus was straightforward: to prepare for examinations.

The teacher participants seemed to misunderstand the role of the piano syllabus and the piano books published by RCM. A syllabus is a course outline; it provides a guide for teachers with requirements for each level to facilitate lessons planning. A selection of music from the syllabus is put into a series of piano books for the convenience of teachers

and students. In other words, the piano books do not include all repertoire listed in the syllabus. When teacher participants talked about their understanding of RCM system, they tended to talk about the books rather than the system. Lily and Patricia both talked about the organization of the selections in the books. Lily noticed an improvement in the inclusion of more contemporary music styles. At the same time, Patricia said that she was still exploring how to present the materials in the book appropriately. They were mainly concerned about the content of the piano books. Even though Sally and Patricia both explained that they did not fully understand the RCM system, they were teaching it and sending students to examinations. The message seems to be that as long as students could play the content of the books, their goal (passing the examination) would be achieved. In addition, Sally mentioned that she also used the materials available at students' homes. She taught without studying the repertoire and she "learn[ed] from the materials" as she taught them. Furthermore, she added: "the choice of materials is [one way of getting students to learn.] How you teach the materials [is more important]. I teach whatever is available." Her words reinforced my earlier point about the emphasis on the technical aspects of teaching and playing in music lessons.

Although teacher participants emphasized technical ability, musical interpretation was also evident in their lessons. Technically, music expression is defined as "the systematic variations in timing, dynamics, timbre, and pitch that form the microstructure of a performance" (Juslin & Persson, 2002, p. 220). Music students must achieve a certain mastery of their instrument before they are technically capable of performing all the elements of music expression listed above. Therefore, private music teachers have a tendency to delay teaching musical expressivity until the students are more advanced in their playing technique (Duke & Simmons, 2006; Juslin & Persson, 2002). It is true that

Lily and Patricia spent more time talking about and demonstrating musical expression in their lessons for advanced students like Heather and Natalie, while Lauren and Sally were more concerned with getting the correct rhythms and playing the right notes. Although both Lauren and Sally claimed that they talked about music expression in their lessons, I did not observe enough students to determine if Lauren and Sally addressed expression with their more advanced students. It might also be possible that Lily and Patricia emphasized artistic expression because that is how they were taught.

The traditional strategies of teaching music interpretation mentioned in Juslin and Persson's (2002) article were evident; the teacher participants applied aural modeling in their lessons. Teachers, however, have to be cautious about modeling with little or no verbal description especially when demonstrating music interpretation (Woody, 2000). A teacher's performance is subjective. Students might have difficulty understanding what to listen for and what specific skills are needed to interpret the music (Juslin & Persson, 2002; Woody, 2000).

Experiential strategies such as the use of metaphor and imagery were also occasionally present. The experiential strategies were not used to express an emotional state in the music. Instead, these strategies were used to describe the technical skills required to express a certain emotion. For example, Sally asked Jack to imagine the feeling of playing basketball when he was learning a passage of staccato notes. In addition, contrary to Woody's (2000) finding that private music teachers tend to use more verbally based instruction regarding music expressivity, aural modeling with some aid of verbal instruction seemed to be the favored way for demonstrating music interpretation among the teacher participants.

Teaching experience influenced how teachers taught music interpretation. More experienced teachers like Lily and Patricia were able to explain the technical skills required for certain musical emotions. In other words, the subjective world of the performer (that is, of course, the teachers' interpretation of the music) and the objective features of performance (the technique) are connected (Juslin & Persson, 2002). Students are able to learn the cause and effect of creating musical emotion. On the other hand, less experienced teachers like Lauren and Sally relied more on the notated music. They mostly followed the expression marks in the music books and called out "soft" or "loud" during student performances. Students might not have felt the emotion generated by the music; rather, they obeyed the printed sign. The response to emotional cues was missing. At the same time, it might also be that the students I observed in Lauren and Sally's lessons were beginners. As a result, their teachers paid more attention to their technical skill development.

### **The Power of Examinations and Festivals**

As mentioned previously, most teacher participants planned their curriculum according to the RCM examination requirements. Besides repertoire, technical exercises, sight-reading and ear training, and music theory were also included to varying degrees in the lessons. Although the teacher participants all recognized the importance of learning the above skills or knowledge, they tended to devote more lesson time to repertoire and leave little or no time for other important components.

Technical exercises are used by instrumentalists to develop and enhance motor skills and by pianists as a way to master their finger movement (McPherson & Gabrielsson, 2002). In contrast to the animated and vivacious qualities of the repertoire, technical

exercises are often regarded as mechanical and dull. Books of technical exercises often consist of drills, scales, chords, and rhythmic patterns without melodic interest. The benefit of these exercises is achieved through repeated practice. This often mindless practice tends to lower student motivation and is typically labeled as “boring” and “uninspiring” by students.

While it is mandatory for students who are taking music examinations to fulfill the technical requirements, student participants displayed a negative view towards playing technical exercises. “I don’t like playing scales. It is boring,” Heather said. Natalie stated that “there is no passion in technique. The pieces are more interesting.” It was two months before the examination period when I did my observations. Teachers and students were at the end of their preparation. I did not get to observe how teachers taught technique. Instead, I observed how teachers tested students on technique. For a 60 minutes lesson, approximately 45 minutes were spent on repertoire, leaving approximately 15 minutes for technique, sight-reading, and ear training. Sometimes no time was left at all. When it was time for the technique, teacher participants named a key and the technique category (e.g., F major scale or G minor harmonic chord), and students performed. Students were asked to repeat the technical passage when a problem (e.g., wrong notes; incorrect fingering) occurred. It was not until students got the correct finger pattern or played the passage flawlessly that they went on to the next task. As McPherson and Gabrielsson (2002) described, repetition seemed to be the only way to teach technique.

While the technical exercises are considered part of musical performance, sight-reading and ear training are categorized as sub skills of musical performance. Western art music uses notated music rather than aural transmission (Nettl, 1995) so the

ability to read music is significant in music learning of the kind described in this study. Lehmann and McArthur (2002) defined sight-reading as a complex skill that involves “perception (decoding note patterns), kinesthetics (executing motor programs), memory (recognizing patterns), and problem-solving skills (improvising and guessing)” (p. 135). It is an ability that allows people to perform music with little or no rehearsal. Ear training, on the other hand, is the process of developing abilities for pitch discrimination, pitch matching, and instrument tuning (Morrison & Fyk, 2002). As there is an ear test and sight-reading test as part of the technical requirements in the RCM music examination, teacher participants prepared their students’ sight-reading and listening skills following the RCM guidelines. The RCM sight-reading test includes performing a musical excerpt and clapping a short rhythmic pattern using sight-reading skills. Identifying intervals, rhythm clap back, melody play back, and cadence and chord identification are part of the listening test.

Although I was unable to observe how sight-reading and listening were addressed during my short visits, teacher participants placed a high value on sight-reading skills in general. Lily and Sally thought that the ability to sight-read is the basis of independent musicianship. “Sight-reading is the most important thing for music students,” Lily said. “One has to know how to play without the assistance of a teacher,” added Sally. Patricia thought that sight-reading was trained by consistently introducing stimulus (in this case, new music) to students. On the other hand, while still believing that having a good ear is critical to successful music learning, teacher participants seemed to have a more hesitant view about ear training, especially the content of the RCM ear test.

Unlike sight-reading skills which can be nurtured, Lily believes that listening skills are an inborn ability:

Honestly, I wouldn't do ear training if it were not for the examination. I wouldn't teach them "this is a perfect fifth" and ask them to memorize the sound. [Listening skill] is related to talent. I have tried ear training with a student for a long time. But he just couldn't get it. Does that mean he cannot play piano? Of course he can still play and enjoy music—without having a good ear. If that's the case, why do we include ear training in our teaching?

Lauren held a similar view towards having ear training in her lessons: "I think if it weren't for the examination, teachers might not pay much attention to ear training."

Patricia identified the advantages of good listening skills. She taught ear training with or without music examination requirements: "Good listening skill make you learn faster and play better." Patricia also mentioned, however, the difficulty of the ear test requirements for the RCM examination: "Intervals and chords are very difficult to identify. If we don't practice often during lessons, it is hard for students to jump into the system all of a sudden." Patricia was not the only one who expressed difficulty in teaching listening skills. Lauren said that "I have to think very hard about how to teach them intervals." That teachers found it difficult to teach listening skills may suggest a lack of the pedagogical knowledge required for ear training and a reliance on their own past learning experiences. Teacher participants reported including the ear training in their lessons mainly for examinations. Maybe ear training is so difficult to teach because of the strong emphasis on music notation in Classical music, and both teachers and students are not aware of the connections between the notated music and the musical sounds being produced. Green (2008) explains this situation:

In instrumental or vocal tuition a great deal of time is spent trying to get learners to produce a 'correct' or conventional tone quality.... Thus young musicians who are brought up through notation none the less need to listen to a range of music, played on the instruments that they are learning, in order to be able to transform notation into sound qualities that are accepted and recognized within the social practices surrounding the relevant style of the music. Many approaches to instrumental and vocal training have tended to somewhat overlook that necessity...relying mainly on the teacher to transmit such knowledge through relatively brief demonstration as well as verbal explanation. Thus young musicians can grow up without expert ears for the kinds of sounds they should be aiming to produce. (p.71)

Furthermore, the ear test requirement of the music examinations are related to technical knowledge such as naming intervals or identifying dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chords, which require prior theory knowledge relying heavily on notation. As a result, “learners may be able to acquire technical knowledge through notation which they are then unable to use effectively when actually making, or listening to, music” (p. 69).

There are many ways that sight-reading and ear training could be integrated into the repertoire. For example, teachers could give short sections from an unknown piece for students to sight-read and could implement such strategies as avoiding looking at hands and maintaining the rhythm and meter without correcting mistakes (Lehmann & McArthur, 2002). They could play unlearned melodies for students to echo back as part of training for auditory sequencing (Haines & Gerber, 2000). The purpose of this training is so students can find a connection between what is written and what they hear.

There were two ways music theory was being taught in the private music lesson I observed. The first was to treat music theory as an independent subject thus further isolating it from the actual music; students took theory lessons in addition to their instrumental lessons. Frank’s teaching is an example of the latter. This form exists to prepare for music examinations. The second is to incorporate theory in instrumental lessons. Elementary music rudiments are usually taught this way. Most method books integrate music rudiments into lessons. Teachers explain the fundamentals such as key signatures, note values, and intervals along with student performance for beginning students. For more advanced students, teachers also analyze the harmony, style, form, and voicing of the pieces.

All teacher participants included music rudiments in their lessons. They believe that integrating music theory into their lessons helped students practice and interpret music



better. “It is easier for students to practice technique when they understand the structures of the scales and chords,” Lauren explained. Patricia analyzed and explained the structure of a new piece before her students sight-reading it: “I want her to hear the harmony in the music. Analyzing the different voices makes her understand what is going on. Once she understands the structure of the music, she will appreciate the piece more. She will understand that the harmony is very important and it is not just the accompaniment of the melody.”

Of the five teacher participants, Sally spent the most time talking about music theory in her lessons. She thought that music theory and piano performing should not be treated like two separate subjects. The theory requirements for the music examinations might be the reason that music theory is generally viewed as an additional subject. “It would be no fun if we treated music theory as a course. Unfortunately, when you take RCM examination, you must also take music theory examination. You must take music theory as a [separate] course,” Lily explained. Students study music theory as they would prepare for a mathematics test. They memorize the rules and write the exercises for the examination. In other words, student doubts regarding music theory are removed by correctly presenting the content of music theory. The musical aspect is missing in this approach. Nevertheless, Lily asserted the importance of teaching music theory: “Music theory has to be learned. Otherwise [students] don’t know music.”

Participating in music festivals and taking music examinations were the two forms of external student assessment used in the private music lessons in my study. Among the five student participants, only Heather and Judy had attended music festivals. It was usually the teachers who provided information about music festivals and encouraged their students to participate. However, Lily indicated that teachers should be cautious about

sending students to festivals: “Some children are very competitive. They feel upset when they do not win a place. As a result, motivation to continue might decrease. Good communication before sending students to festivals is required.” Mullins (1998) suggested that giving students the option to select the “comment only” option instead of having their performances graded helps avoid disappointment. Lily’s sensitivity towards individual students’ feelings about festivals somewhat contradicts the traditional authority value in which students absolutely obey a teacher’s decision to take an examination. The latter is an example of adapting to the Western cultural value of respecting students as individuals. All teacher participants indicated that despite the competitive nature of music festivals, they viewed them as opportunities for on-stage experience and a chance for students to listen to others. They also provided teachers with objective feedback to student work and identification of previously unnoticed flaws or successes.

All student participants except Jack took music examinations. The purpose of taking music examinations, according to the teacher participants, was to provide learning goals for students. As in the research (Davidson & Scutt, 1999; McCormick & McPherson, 2003; McPherson & McCormick, 2000), music examinations were treated like a motivational aid for student learning. The teacher participants identified the examination system of the Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM) as the most popular examination system among the Taiwanese Canadian community. Convenient access to the curriculum materials, using the same system, and prestige were the three main reasons given by teacher participants for choosing RCM over other systems.

In order to prepare students for examinations, teacher participants chose their teaching materials from the RCM syllabi. Davidson and Scutt (1999) discussed the positive and negative effects of the examination system:

On the one hand, the system ensures that learners are introduced to a varied repertoire and specific technical tasks, such as sight-reading, scales and technical exercises. On the other hand, students can be constrained by the particular demands of the examination system. An archetype here would be of a child who could only play the examination pieces, scales and technical exercises and who, as a consequence, would be unable to engage in improvisation.... If teachers work from the examination syllabus alone, they are overlooking other aspects of musical experience for development. (p. 81)

Although the teacher participants claimed that preparing students for examinations was not their only goal, they taught solely from the examination syllabus with students who chose to take examinations. Listening skills and sight-reading skills were included in lessons mostly because of the examinations. The repertoire was prepared according to the requirements of the examination. Student singing was rarely encouraged during lessons. Moreover, although some piano method books include compositional and improvisational activities, I did not observe any of these activities in the RCM curriculum. Green (2008) commented that the examination systems and the formal music teaching practices of the present time have put a strong emphasis on the development of linguistic concepts, theory, and notation. The lack of compositional and improvisational activities corresponds with my earlier point about the emphasis of the notated music in the classically oriented private music lessons.

As Davidson and Scutt (1999) found, parent and student participants indicated that teachers were the ones who suggested taking an examination. Respecting and obeying the teachers as the authoritative figures, parent and student participants often accepted teachers' suggestions without objection. On the other hand, teacher participants all said that they "asked" or "discussed" with students and their parents whether or not to take an examination.

The results of music examinations can influence students' self-efficacy (McPherson & McCormick, 2000). Similar to what Lily mentioned about sending students to

competitions, teachers have to pay special attention when sending young children to examinations. Indeed, teacher participants all felt that students should not take music examinations at an early age. Teachers identified around 9-years old as the appropriate age. Sally worried that the pressure of preparation might lower children's motivation if examinations were introduced too early. Patricia explained that she waited until students achieved a certain technical level before sending them to examinations. "When they can interpret music a little," she said.

Student participants generally had positive attitudes towards music examinations. "[The music examination] more or less helps increase my music knowledge," Judy explained. Heather said that she had undergone a thorough preparation for her examinations yet she did not mind doing it. Natalie expressed her stage anxiety and how she always played better at home, yet she enjoyed the moment when she got to see her scores: "so I know that all my hard work paid off. And if I [get a good mark], I know that I have improved each time." Overall, student participants saw examinations as opportunities for self improvement. It may be that examinations are another form of authority that students obeyed, followed, and used to prove themselves.

None of the parent participants in this research were pushy. They supported teachers and their children's decision to take music examinations: "We don't know much about music. We listen to the teacher's suggestions most of the time" (Mrs. Woo). Mrs. Cho, Mrs. Chen, and Mrs. Woo believed that taking music examinations was a way of proving their children's ability: "It's a qualification" (Mrs. Chen). On the other hand, Mrs. Yang was not a big fan. Since Judy was going to pursue music as a career, Mrs. Yang did not care about grades: "What's the use of the grades? The teacher wanted her to take an examination so she went. But I personally don't care about this examination system."

Their words stressed my earlier point that teachers are the main reason why parents send their children to examinations.

To conclude, music examinations were one of the major learning and teaching goals for most teacher and student participants. The teachers organized their lesson content around these events while most students practiced for them. Only a few studies have explored the role of music examinations in private music lessons (McCormick & McPherson, 2003). This is definitely an important area that requires more attention. Nevertheless, music examinations and festivals assess students' musical learning. They assess how successfully student doubts have been removed. Regardless of the different views held by participants, the music examinations and festivals figured prominently in the private music lessons of these Taiwanese Canadians.

### **Students and their Learning**

In my literature review chapter, I described students as inexperienced apprentices learning from experts. Private music students are a unique group of people who share similar characteristics and experiences. In this section, I share my discoveries about private music students, including my student participants and their teachers, when they were students.

The five student participants (Heather, Leo, Jack, Natalie, and Judy) were all born in Taiwan and came to Canada during their primary and elementary school years. Heather, Jack, and Judy had a few years of elementary schooling in Taiwan. Natalie and Leo began their school education in Canada. Among the three older students who went to school in Taiwan, Judy studied in the Music Talent Program and spent the longest time in the Taiwanese school system. According to their parents, all student participants but Jack

were high school academic-achievers, consistent with Duke et al. (1997).

Corresponding with Duke et al. (1997) and Jørgensen's (2001) research, all five students started their private music lessons at an early age. Heather started taking piano at 6, and Leo, at 5. Both Judy and Natalie started taking music lessons at 4. Jack, who started taking lessons at 10, was the late starter among this group of children. Three students (Heather, Natalie, Judy) started to take private music lessons when they were in Taiwan; two (Jack and Leo) began their lessons in Canada. In addition to piano, all student participants were learning a second orchestral or band instrument either through school band or string programs or private music lessons. Three students played violin (Judy, Jack, and Leo); one played trumpet (Jack); and one played flute (Heather). Besides Natalie, who is an only child, the other student participants all have siblings who had or were currently taking private music lessons.

### **Theme 3. "Putting into practice what you have learned"**

Confucius once said: "*xue er shi xi zhi, bu yi yue hu?*" [Is it not a pleasure to acquire knowledge and, as you proceed, to put into practice what you have acquired?] (Ku, 1984, p. 1). This saying corresponds with what the teacher participants told me. The purpose of music learning was for students to enjoy music by using the knowledge and skills they had acquired. The only way to master the musical knowledge and skills learned in private music lessons is through practicing. But what motivates students to endure the long hours of practicing and continue with their lessons?

The reasons my Taiwanese Canadian student participants took private music lessons were mostly extrinsic. Similarly to Duke et al.'s (1997) study of piano students in the United States, all student and teacher participants stated that they took instrumental

lessons either because their parents suggested they do so or made the decision for them. Other extrinsic reasons in this study included: the convenience of having an instrument at home (Lily & Sally), the convenience of having a private music teacher coming to teach at home (Jack), the possibility of becoming a glamorous music performer (Sally), the influence of siblings (Frank), the influence of peers (Lauren), and the usefulness of a hobby (Frank). Sally was the only one who clearly showed intrinsic motivation from the beginning: “I always like singing as a young child.... That’s why I said yes to piano lessons.”

Although the majority of the student and teacher participants began their private music lessons externally motivated, it is intrinsic factors that helped students persist with their lessons and practicing (see Pitts et al., 2000b). Agreeing with Davidson et al. (1996), based on my interviews of both student and teacher participants, I found that the students’ extrinsic motivation for learning gradually became intrinsic once they became teenagers. Heather, for example, explained that although she started piano to satisfy her mother, her liking of music grew as she played. This love of music further motivated her to study flute and violin. Judy said that she practiced and continued to take lessons because “my mother forced me in the beginning. Now I have made practicing a habit. And I have gradually cultivated an interest in music.” These students have put their acquired music knowledge into practice and, further, more find pleasure in it. The other example is Patricia who at first practiced to obey her mother and teacher. According to Patricia, she did not become self-motivated until she was preparing for a piano competition in Grade 8. Although performing in the piano competition was extrinsically motivated, this motivation was reinforced by a desire for achievement and competence. This need to achieve success and avoid failure became internalized (Hallam, 2002).

A desire for self-efficacy appeared to be another intrinsic reason for students in this study to pursue their musical learning. According to Hallam (2002), feelings of competence in music promote intrinsic motivation. Private music students continue to take lessons and practice or even make a career choice in music because they believe that music is one thing they can do successfully. Judy said that she liked playing violin because it made her feel special. Lauren and Sally said that they “don’t have anything that helps them excel” except music. Although Patricia and Lily both indicated that they sometimes felt they had limited their learning to music, they both thought that music was the only path where they felt secure and confident. In other words, that they played an instrument made the students shine and stand out from the crowd. The feeling of being able to do a task well is a pleasure. The pleasure of being capable of putting what they have acquired into practice leads to increased motivation (Bandura, 1989).

Students’ attributions of success and failure also play a big part in their intrinsic motivation (Dweck, 2000; Legette, 1998). Under the influence of the Confucian values, both student and teacher participants attributed their success in private musical learning to effort rather than ability. Although Lily, Patricia, and Judy were labeled as “talented” when they were young, they ascribed their musical achievement to “practicing hard.” Consistent with C.P. Schmidt’s (2005) finding, the older and advanced students like Judy and Heather attributed their achievement to intrinsic or mastery orientations. Judy attributed her achievement to her efforts and she felt “happy when [I] overcome a problem” while Heather identified practicing as leading to her “enjoyment” of music. On the other hand, the younger and beginner students like Leo, Jack, and Natalie related success to extrinsic, ego, and failure avoidance orientations. Leo defined success as “getting them right” (failure avoidance) while Jack thought “getting the stickers”



represented success (extrinsic reward). Furthermore, Natalie related her achievement to “getting a good mark” (extrinsic reward) and “the teacher says I do a good job” (ego involvement).

Jack was the only one who permanently dropped out of piano lessons right after my observations of his four lessons. As mentioned previously, the tense mother-son relationship made practicing a negative experience for him. Intrinsic motivation never developed over the one year that Jack studied piano. The purpose of practicing for Jack was to obey the authority of his teacher and mother: “If I don’t practice then I don’t know the stuff and the teacher will get mad of me for not practicing.... And my mom gets mad because I am spending her money.” His words corresponded with research that children and teenagers often try to fulfill the expectations of teachers and parents (Brand, 2002; Jordan-Decarbo & Nelson, 2002; O’Neill & McPherson, 2002; Persson, 1995). As Pitts et al. (2000b) predicted, as Jack relied mainly on extrinsic factors for motivation, when the external motivation diminished (i.e., his mother stopped pushing him), Jack’s desire to learn faded. When students’ goal orientation towards practicing and music learning are for extrinsic reasons, they will be more likely to withdraw from music lessons (Smith, 2005).

Both Duke et al. (1997) and Williams (2002) stated that balancing music lessons within other activities is another reason children quit private music lessons. Jack, for example, was facing increased academic pressure when he entered junior high school. He gave up piano because he had difficulty finding time to practice. Natalie also stopped taking piano lessons for six months soon after the observations; she was preparing for the entrance examination for a Transition program. Wanting her to concentrate on her studies, Natalie’s mother called her teacher and asked for a break from piano. Although Natalie

resumed her piano lessons after her examination, the above examples clearly reveal the value that Taiwanese parents place on academic performance; they support their children's decision to quit when the choice is between school work or private music studies.

Although the teacher participants continued their private music learning in order to reach where they are today, two of the teachers admitted that they had temporarily interrupted their musical studies. Like Jack and Natalie, Lauren and Sally took breaks from their lessons when facing academic pressure in high school in Taiwan. They did not resume their lessons until they moved to Canada and the academic pressure decreased. In addition, Lauren also remembered that she had taken several short breaks when she was younger. Interestingly, Lauren and Sally's parents took different approaches when dealing with their daughters wanting to quit piano lessons. Lauren's mother did not try to push or persuade Lauren to continue her lessons. Lauren made the decision to stop or resume her lessons herself. Lauren's mother also never forced her to practice. Lauren believed that this freedom increased her intrinsic motivation:

People think that if a mother does not insist on her child's instrumental learning, the child will quit easily. But sometimes forcing a child to continue learning may have negative results. The child might turn against the learning because of pressure from the parents. Music is something to be enjoyed. In the case when the child is still interested in music, giving her some time to think about what [she wants] over the breaks might be a good idea. At least this is how my mother dealt with me.

In another words, Lauren was implying that intrinsic motivation (interest in music) might be negatively affected by extrinsic motivators (parents' persistence) when extrinsic motivators are not properly implemented. Lauren also indicated that her interest in music was her own and that "she never likes to be pushed." Her mother's understanding of her daughter's personality and ability to deal with her daughter accordingly provided the needed motivational factors. On the other hand, Sally's mother encouraged and persuaded

Sally to stay with her piano lessons when Sally wanted to quit. Although her mother encouraged Sally to continue her lessons, it was Sally's interest in music that kept her going. Lauren and Sally's stories demonstrate that while extrinsic motivators such as support from parents can positively affect students' decisions to stay with their lessons, intrinsic motivators such as enjoying and having an interest in music are actually what made the students persist with their private music lessons.

Student participants seemed to have a clear view about why they practiced: to improve their skills. Heather, Judy, and Natalie also stated that they practiced to entertain themselves, somewhat supporting their teachers' belief that the purpose of music lessons is enjoyment. Apparently, the older and more advanced students were starting to realize the pleasure of applying knowledge, finding merit in what Confucius said that it is a pleasure to put knowledge acquired into practice.

Besides the learning time spent on the weekly lessons, most learning happened during practice time. Student participants practiced from 10 minutes to two hours per day depending on their playing level and age. Older and advanced students tended to have longer practice times than younger and beginning students. As Coffman (1990) confirmed, although the student participants understood their teachers' expectations about practicing, they typically invested less time than their teachers expected. For example, Patricia expected her advanced students to play more than an hour per day. Her student Natalie, indicated that "sometimes I don't practice. Sometimes I play 10 to 30 minutes." Jack said that he understood the practice expectations of his teacher and mother yet he skipped practice because he "lost interest in piano and wanted to do something else."

Regulated practice schedules are a common practice strategy that instrumental music teachers sometimes impose on their students (Duke et al., 1997). Despite the fact that

teachers have different expectations about students' practice time, none of the teacher participants used this strategy explicitly with their students. As Hallam (2001) and Jørgensen (2002) found, Lily and Sally believe that the quality of practice was more important than the quantity of time. Effectively practicing the acquired knowledge from lessons is valued by the teachers. "Students are busy with their own lives. I don't expect them to practice every day. If they meet my expectations, I do not regulate them on how much time they should spend on practicing," Lily said. Sally also explained: "I don't force them to practice for a certain time period. But I pressure them so that they have to present the good stuff to me when we are having lessons. If it's not good stuff, then I won't want to listen [to their playing]." Although Sally did not assign a specific practice time to her students, she expected her students to practice at least five days a week. She asked students to put down a checkmark after they practiced each day. By counting the checkmarks in the lessons, she was able to monitor how often her students practiced. Sally's use of check marks to record practice time is similar to the practice time records that are a popular strategy for younger students (Duke et al., 1997).

Teachers' expectations of practicing were sometimes conveyed to students in subtle ways. Sally was the only one who gave specific details about what she expected for the next lesson. She wrote down everything she wanted her students to do in a notebook and relied on the notebook to record students' progress. The notebook served as a written record of the acquired knowledge. For other teacher participants, practice expectations were embedded in the lessons when strategies were introduced. These were delivered as hands-on experiences to students. In another words, the teacher participants practiced practicing with students during their lessons.

As described earlier, teacher participants unconsciously applied scaffolding theory in

their teaching. They located the problem, analyzed it, found a way to solve the problem at hand, and assisted students with practicing until the problem was resolved. The goal was to solve a specific problem. The process of solving a goal-oriented problem is the “deliberate practice” mentioned by McPherson and Renwick (2001). Deliberate practice could be found throughout the 20 lessons I observed. After identifying a problem, teacher participants broke the music into appropriate segments and practiced with students until they had overcome their difficulty. When teaching a new piece, teacher participants taught students to play hands separately and slowly, gradually increasing the tempo.

Repetition was a practice strategy that all teacher participants showed their students in their lessons. Hallam (2001) and Pitts et al. (2000a) found that repetition is the most common strategy applied to obtain physical motor skills such as getting right fingerings or increasing the speed. In my study, repetition was also used as a trial and error method when students were exploring dynamics, tone color, and articulations. Teacher participants asked their students to play a phrase until the desired result was achieved. Uszler (2003) indicated that repetition is an absolute requirement to develop motor skills. Once the motor skills are developed, students become aware of how skills can affect the sound they produce. Uszler categorized how students learn through repetition:

Stage 1 – “Become aware of what’s to be done and how to do it” (p. 22).  
[Teachers find and analyze the problem and show students how to solve it.]

Stage 2 – “Provide support while skill is being learned” (p. 22). [Students learn through repeated trial and error with their teachers’ guidance and feedback.]

Stage 3 – “Develop an inner awareness” (p. 22). [Students learn through trial and error and transfer their teachers’ comments into inner feedback.]

Stage 4 – “Repeat skill, refining it” (p. 25). [Students continuously use the skills learned during the lesson and refine the skill at home.]

Stage 5 – “Skill becomes second nature” (p. 25). [The skills become automatic and continue to be refined throughout students’ musical learning.]

Stage 6 – “Awareness of what can affect skill” (p. 25). [Inner awareness is finally achieved, arriving at the goal of deliberate practice.]

While advocating the importance of repetition, Uszler also suggested that teachers should be cautious about using repetition in the beginning stages because “the heart of motor learning is inner feedback” (p. 21). Without developing inner awareness, “blind” repetition can reinforce behaviors without awareness of the appropriateness of the behaviors (Johnston, 2002). When this happens, problems can be practiced instead of solutions.

Student participants tended to practice scales, exercises, and repertoire in a routine way paralleling their lessons. As mentioned previously, student participants expressed a dislike of practicing scales and technical exercises. Even though the teacher participants showed their students how to practice during lessons, the student participants did not necessarily follow their teachers’ strategies, a point also noted by Hallam (2001). And teachers could only infer how their students practiced at home: “Honestly, I don’t know if they follow my practice strategies at home. It is my responsibility as a teacher to show them [how to practice] though. But what they are doing at home is really beyond my control” (Lily). Self regulators like Heather and Judy established good practice habits through self instruction and self guidance so they were able to select strategies to match their goals (see also Nielsen, 2001; Hallam, 2001). They both indicated that they used the practice strategies demonstrated by their teachers. On the other hand, playing through and repeating the entire piece seemed to be the only strategy that younger students like Jack, Natalie, and Leo used. As cognitive psychologists indicated that metacognitive skills do not develop until children grow older (Lutz & Sternberg, 1999), these examples suggest that time is needed for young instrumentalists to turn into self-regulators (Hallam, 2001;

McPherson & Renwick, 2001).

Overall, the confidence of being able to put acquired musical knowledge and skills into practice and further find pleasure from what they had learned was the intrinsic motivation for student participants to continue with their private music lessons and practicing. Students practiced what they had acquired (from the lessons) in order to put into practice what they had acquired (thus becoming more independent musicians). It is through this process of practicing the known and progressing through the unknown to a new known that true learning takes place.

### **Gender Differences**

While gender issues may not be as prominent as other cultural issues in this study and are not directly related to either “removing doubt” or “Putting into practice what you have acquired” themes, there are still several areas that I would like to address because these areas are directly related to student motivation.

First, instrumental choice was related to student’s gender (Conway, 2000; Elliot, 1996; Harrison & O’Neill, 2000; Ho, 2003). For example, singing and piano playing are usually viewed as female music activities whereas conducting and large orchestral instruments are for males (Ho, 2003). Supporting Ho’s findings, the girls in my research tended to choose indoor instruments such as violin, flute, *er-hu* (Chinese fiddle), and piano while the boys favored brass instruments such as trumpet and French horn. In addition, as it was Taiwanese parents who made decisions about their children’s instrumental choices, the latter also chose the instruments according to the gender stereotyping (Dibben, 2002). For example, Lily’s mother thought that the flute was more appropriate for girls: “It is elegant for girls to play flute.” The Taiwanese parents in my

study show a strong tendency to support gender stereotyping in their instrumental choices.

Second, based on the gender of most of the teacher and student participants, music is considered a feminine activity in the Taiwanese community. Taiwanese Canadian private music teachers' career choice was also influenced by their gender. Frank talked about how his wife had studied music yet was against his decision to pursue music as a career: "Taiwanese parents wouldn't want a musician daughter to marry another musician because [musicians] do not make a lot of money in general." Sally explained her parents' attitudinal change towards her career choice after she switched from business to music: "They did not fret too much because they thought that as a girl, it was not necessary for me to fight in the business field." These examples present traditional Taiwanese values that link a career in music to women. This finding corresponds to Hallam, Rogers, and Creech's (2008) findings that female instrumentalists predominate in Asia.

Lastly, parent participants noticed different attitudes to learning between Taiwanese Canadian boys and girls in this study. Girls were more attentive and tended to practice voluntarily without reminders. Boys tended to have less patience and needed more parental supervision when practicing. Girls were more active and showed more interest in their musical learning whereas boys were more passive and appeared less interested. Boys lost interest in music easily while girls were more persistent in their musical studies. Girls were more obedient whereas boys needed more scolding from their parents. This is consistent with the findings of Whiting and Edward's (1974) cross cultural study of sex differences in children's behaviors. Moreover, Taiwanese Canadian girls practiced longer and responded more to teachers and parents while boys spent less time practicing and were less likely to respond positively to encouragement or pressure from teachers and



parents. Similar differences were noted by Hallam (2004) in her study of sex differences of school aged students' music attainment. Although most of the references I used in this section discuss Western students, the gender differences are similar between Taiwanese Canadian students. In conclusion, gender had an impact on the choice of instruments, career direction, and the attitudes towards private music learning of Taiwanese Canadians.

#### **Theme 4. *Pei* — Keeping Company**

All five parent participants in this study are married women in their late thirties and early forties living with their children. Four of the women claimed that they are the primary caregivers and hold the primary responsibility for nurturing and educating their children (Mrs. Woo, Mrs. Choi, Mrs. Ho, and Mrs. Yang). Only one, Mrs. Chen, indicated that her husband shared equal responsibility for raising their child. In addition to the parents that I interviewed, the five private music teachers also stated that their mothers were the ones who decided they would take private music lessons.

Contrary to Duke et al.'s (1997) findings about parents of private music students in United States, none of the Taiwanese parent participants received formal music training when they were young. One started taking piano lessons for a short term after her children began piano lessons in order to help her children learn better (Mrs. Yang). Instead of having positive attitudes towards music lessons as children as Duke et al. described, three parents did not have positive memories about their school music education in Taiwan. Because of the pressure of high school/college entrance examinations, the emphasis on academic subjects made non-academic subjects such as music and art less important. It is a common phenomenon that teachers of academic

subjects such as Mathematics and Chemistry borrow the time of music classes for examinations or additional lessons for those academic subjects (Ministry of Education Taiwan, 2008; Xiao, 2007). However, music teachers still needed to submit the students' grades to the school, and the easiest way to grade students was through tests. As not enough time was given to music training, those who could not afford private instrumental lessons outside the school received low grades. Unsatisfactory grades lowered confidence. As a result, the parent participants' negative experience of school music education was often related to not being able to identify the notes for the music tests or not being able to sing in front of their classmates.

As Orsmond and Miller (1999) mentioned, despite the fact that these parents did not have a good impression of their school music education, they enjoyed all kinds of music activities as amateurs. Among these music activities, singing and listening to music were most enjoyed. Karaoke singing, singing in choirs and singing religious music were the three singing activities parents identified. Parents' musical preference varied from religious to popular music.

In addition to the above music activities, teachers' parents seemed to have been involved in more musical activities than the parent participants. For example, Lily's mother played piano; Lauren's mother sang in the community choir; and Patricia's mother collected records and listened to classical music extensively. From the teachers' descriptions of their parents' musical listening preference, I found that classical music was the predominant music style played in the teachers' families. The above examples coincide with Sosniak's (1985) findings that most high music achievers are from families interested in avocational music activities.

Research indicates that high parental involvement is the key to successful musical learning in children (Barry & McArthur, 1994; Davidson et al., 1996; Duke et al., 1997; Macmillan, 2004; McPherson & Davidson, 2002; McPherson & Renwick, 2001; Pitts et al., 2000a; Pitts et al., 2000b). When I first asked the parent participants about their role in private music lessons, their immediate response was “I *pei* him/her.” *Pei* is a verb that literally means to keep someone company. This response shows that the parents believe that their primary role in the private music lessons is to stay with their children throughout the whole process of private music learning. “*Pei*” can be further divided into the following functions: finding a teacher, providing transportation, providing financial supports, acting as a coach, communicating with the teacher, being an audience, reminding the child to practice, attending while children practice, and providing support. Among these activities, involvement with children’s musical practice has a direct impact on children’s learning (Zdzinski, 1996).

Consistent with Duke et al. (1997) and Barry and MacArthur (1994), the parent participants provided more supervision for their young children early on. In contrast to Duke et al.’s (1997) finding that parents of piano students in the United States usually did not sit in their children’s lessons, all five Taiwanese parents indicated that they sat with their children when they first started their lessons so they would be aware of what happened in the lessons in order to help them at home. In fact, it is mandatory for parents to be present in group music class such as the Yamaha program and the Suzuki method so they can assist their young children (Colprit, 2000; Miranda, 2000). The differences between Taiwanese and American parents stem from a difference in cultural values addressed in the first theme. Taiwanese parents as authority figures are responsible for the well being of their children. They also sit in on the lessons to make sure that their

children are being obedient.

Besides attending their children's lessons, some parents took further steps to broaden their own musical understanding in order to enhance their children's learning. Mrs. Yang, for example, realized that she could not monitor her eldest daughter's piano practice because she did not have any musical training. With the goal of developing her second daughter Judy into a professional musician, she started taking piano lessons herself when Judy started. "I needed to know about music so I know when Judy made mistakes in her playing," Mrs. Yang explained. Similarly, Mrs. Choi also took adult piano class after she found that her son was struggling with his first piano teacher: "I could only be patient and *pei* him in the beginning [without knowing about piano]. So I took piano lessons myself." Besides taking lessons, Mrs. Choi borrowed books on piano instruction from the library and studied them extensively: "I wanted to know how to motivate and assist my son in his piano learning." Again, the authority aspect is evident. These Taiwanese Canadian parents felt that they were obligated to assist their children in learning, consistent with Ying Ling Wang's (n.d.) saying that parents are responsible to feed and educate their children in his famous *San Zi Jing* [The Three Characters Classics].

The parent participants were involved in their children's practicing in various ways of *Pei*. The first obvious *pei* is that they all have to be there to occasionally "remind" their children to practice (Duke et al., 1997; McPherson & Davidson, 2002). Although older and self motivated students like Julia and Heather understood that practicing is a necessary commitment and they practiced voluntarily, their mothers mentioned that there were still times when they needed to prompt their daughters to practice when they were younger. This behavior is consistent with Duke et al.'s (1997) findings that parents of younger students "remind" or "make" their children practice more than the parents of the

older students. Nevertheless, “reminding” and “making” or “motivating” their children to practice was a difficult task for some parents. In order to convince her daughter to practice, Mrs. Chen used a point reward system when she was very young. Immediate rewards such as chocolate bars or playing time with friends were given after certain reward points were achieved. These are the incentives that parents of young private music students tend to apply when making their children practice (Duke et al., 1997). Mrs. Ho also had trouble getting her son to practice. Although I did not spend much time observing the parenting style of Mrs. Ho, I could clearly see that the way she educated her son fits Davidson and Borthwick’s (2002) description of the traditional authoritarian style in Chinese culture; she was strict, highly controlling, and expected her son to obey and do as he was told. Since Mrs. Ho did not have proper musical training and could not assist Jack during his practice, she asked Jack to sit in front of the piano and practice for a certain time. When Jack did not act as his mother expected, she yelled, scolded, lost patience, got angry, and eventually gave up on making Jack practice. Practicing thus became a recurring negative experience for both mother and son. As McPherson and Davidson (2002) said, there are “mothers who appeared to have little idea about how to support their children’s practice, and therefore allowed them to do very low levels of practice” (p.147). Poor practice habits lead to poor learning outcomes. Seeing the tensions and the unhappiness between the mother and son, I was not surprised to find that Jack quit his piano lessons soon after the interview and observations. It is hard to say if Jack would have had a more pleasant piano learning experience if Mrs. Chen had applied a more encouraging parenting style. One thing is likely: Jack’s intrinsic motivation to play the piano did not develop.

Listening to children practice is the second form of *pei* (Duke et al., 1997; McPherson & Davidson, 2002; McPherson & Renwick, 2001). All five parent participants listened to their children practice. This listening can be further divided into listening attentively while guiding and assisting the child and a less active listening while doing other activities such as household chores and reading. Consistent with McPherson and Renwick (2001)'s study, most parent participants decreased the time of the attentive listening after their children passed the beginner stage. However, they still monitored their children's practice through less active listening. In fact, four families placed their piano in the living room where the piano sound spread throughout the entire house. Mrs. Yang's house was the only one that had a music room. Without special soundproofing, however, practicing could still be easily heard. When Judy was younger in Taiwan, Mrs. Yang used to listen to Judy practice upstairs at her residence while she worked in her breakfast eatery below. Her purpose was to make sure that Judy had fulfilled her daily practice requirement. "I also listened for the mistakes she made during practices [and later told her to correct them]," Mrs. Yang added. Although Mrs. Woo had consistently mentioned that she did not have enough musical knowledge to understand what her children were learning, she acted as an audience for her daughter: "My daughter would specifically ask me to listen to her play. I would sit on the couch, just listen to her, and compliment her afterwards. That made her happy." Besides serving as an audience, parents also listened to their children's practice as companions: "[My daughter] gets bored [easily]. So I am always around reading or doing housework when she practices," Mrs. Chen said. Mrs. Choi agreed: "I want him to know that he is not alone. It was torture when he needed to face the piano all by himself."

Guiding or assisting children's music practice is yet another form of parental involvement (Duke et al., 1997; McPherson & Davidson, 2002; McPherson & Renwick, 2001). As mentioned previously, parents tend to guide or assist their children in the early stage of musical learning and gradually step out after children have established a positive practice habit or when children become more self-motivated as they get older (Davidson et al., 1996). Given that young children usually have shorter attention spans and require more adult supervision in their learning, it is only logical that the parents tended to supervise their children when they were younger. Mrs. Choi, for example, avidly assisted and guided her son Leo in his piano practice in the first two years of his piano lessons: "I spent one to two hours everyday to *pei* him. I drew the notes [on the flashcards] and *pei* him [to get familiar with the notes].... I sang with him when he practiced.... Even my mother-in-law understood that [she had to take over the household chores] when I *pei* Leo to practice." When I asked Mrs. Choi if she still helped Leo now, she said: "Not anymore. He is older now. And he is more [knowledgeable about piano] now." Mrs. Choi and other parent participants' words about how they stepped back after their children matured a little revealed their level of knowledge. As described previously, the parent participants in this study had received little or no musical training. They were able to assist their children in the beginning stages when simple musical concepts such as notes and basic fingerings are learned. Nevertheless, musical instruments need to be learned through the actual playing. Therefore, by the time students reached the level beyond the basics, these parents could no longer keep up with their progress so they backed away from their role of assisting their children.

As Pitts et al. (2000b) found, the parents' continued moral support and the positive attitudes towards private music learning were also important to children's learning.

Encouragement such as Mrs. Woo's verbal praise and Mrs. Chen's use of rewards are examples from their stories. In addition, implementing positive attitudes such as Mrs. Woo's encouraging her daughter to attend examinations and festivals and Mrs. Yang's ambition and eagerness for her daughter Judy to become a musician all greatly influenced their children's attitude towards learning music and being musicians.

To conclude, it is the different forms of *pei* of Taiwanese Canadian parents that create an effective musical learning environment for their children. Research indicates that these different forms of parental *pei* can also be found in the Western private music lessons (Duke et al., 1997; McPherson & Davidson, 2002; McPherson & Renwick, 2001; Pitts et al., 2000b). Similar to Macmillan's (2004) finding, offering assistance, providing encouragement, reminding their children to practice, and listening to their children's music are the kinds of parental involvement identified in this study.

### **The Importance of Positive Relationships**

Students' parents were the ones who reinforced student learning at home. They often made decisions about issues related to students' private music learning such as their participation in examinations and scheduling lessons. Good communication between teachers and students' parents plays a vital role in successful private music teaching and learning (Bobetsky, 2003).

Teacher participants identified that they had positive relationships with their students' parents. The fact that Lily, Lauren, and Sally have spent more time in a Western society, has led to alterations in their traditional values and the adoption of some, sometimes contradictory Western values. For example, instead of seeing themselves as authorities, Lily, Lauren, and Sally viewed themselves as equal in status to their students'



parents. They said that they eventually became friends with their students' parents over the years. Their relationship started with discussions about the children's learning. As the teacher and parent became better acquainted, they started to exchange more personal conversations. Lily described her relationship with her students' parents: "We are not the type of friends who would go out and have a cup of coffee. We don't go out for dinner. Our conversations usually revolve around the children, but the conversations have shifted to other topics such as where I am going for vacation." Lauren said that her students' parents were not afraid to communicate with her: "Of course we are not close friends, but we communicate well. They feel free to call me anytime. It's mainly discussions about their children, but sometimes they gossip and ask questions like if I have a boyfriend." Sally claimed that she treated students and their parents as partners in a team: "It is important to treat students' parents like friends.... I don't want to be the teacher who thinks of herself as an authority. We three are a team." On the other hand, Frank and Patricia's relationships with students' parents were more traditional. Following the Confucian value of respect for authority, Frank said that his students' parents "respect" him. Patricia thought that she and students' parents complemented each other: "We help each other to make children learn pleasantly. I cooperate with parents' request. At the same time, they cooperate with me."

Teacher participants communicated with their students' parents in person or by phone. Casual chats after lessons were the most common form of communication. In order to avoid hurting students' feelings, teacher and parent participants tended to discuss children's problems by phone. A change of lesson time was another reason for teachers and parents to call each other.

Overall, teacher participants and their students' parents supported each other to provide the best learning environment for students. Both teacher and parent participants indicated that they kept an open communication and maintained a positive and friendly relationship.

### **Valuing Private Music Lessons**

Previously, I discussed the traditional cultural values of Taiwanese Canadians and how these values influence private music teaching and learning. Here, I want to discuss how private music lessons are valued, beginning with how Taiwanese students' parents value private music lessons – their reasons for sending their children to private music lessons.

#### **Theme 5. Status Symbol**

Several reasons contributed to parents' decisions to send their children to private music lessons. First, was the decision to fulfill one of their childhood dreams. As Williams (2002) described, these parents wanted to give their children something they had missed. Perhaps because some parents did not have a pleasant memory of school music, they did not want their children to experience the same helpless feelings: "It is a way to compensate myself for what I missed as a child. My family could not afford music lessons when I was young. I was good in singing but I didn't have the ability to play an instrument. This has been my biggest regret until now," explained Mrs. Choi. Mrs. Ho wanted to provide more options for her children: "I don't know much about music. I could not read the notes [in my high school music]. I don't want my children to be like me. That's why I send them to lessons." Mrs. Yang also described: "My family was poor. I used to envy children who took instrumental lessons. Therefore I sent my children to

lessons when I was financially able.” Mrs. Chen further admitted that she was trying to grasp what she missed as a child: “It is my dream come true seeing my beautiful daughter performing on the stage!”

Secondly, Taiwanese parents believe that taking music lessons promises their children a better life. They think that music is a necessity to cultivate children’s temperaments and personalities. They see music as a way to express feelings and cope with emotions. They also view music as a life skill that their children might be able to use as an alternative way of earning a living. In addition, they read and hear about how music helps brain development in the media. Since taking private music lessons has become a societal norm, most parents are afraid that their children will fall behind because “Everyone is doing it!” (Mrs. Choi). Thus, they decided to send their children to private music lessons at an early age. As Borthwick and Davidson (2002) described, this is a “hothousing” technique in which parents deliberately control, plan and push their children towards maximum potential. Mrs. Yang’s idea of constructing Judy’s musical career path is just one example of this “hothousing” technique.

Third, sending children to music lessons represents a status symbol for the parents; it is an indicator of parental success (Jordan-Decarbo & Nelson, 2002). Of the five parent participants, four parents indicated that the reason they did not receive proper musical training is that they came from a poor economic backgrounds. Being able to afford private music lessons for their children meant that they were doing better than their own parents financially. For these parents, their children’s education is sometimes regarded as an investment, as Sheppard (1998) mentioned. This view was strongly emphasized in Mrs. Yang and Judy’s story when Mrs. Yang said that she would not allow her daughter to quit music because she and her husband had already invested so much money and time. Her

statement about how her daughter's study of music brought her family's social class up the social ladder from blue collar class to a status which was capable of supporting and nurturing a musician suggests that taking music lessons is prestigious. Mrs. Chen expressed the same view when she talked about how she hoped her daughter would be a musician. In Mrs. Chen's view, a professional musician is an ideal job that brings out human "beauty" and "righteousness" in comparison to other professions. Music, according to Mrs. Chen, is a discipline that belongs to people with high "*wen hua shui ping*." In other words, music belongs to people of higher social class who are well educated and affluent both culturally and financially. Thus, vanity may be satisfied by sending children to music lessons (Jordan-Decarbo & Nelson, 2002).

Lastly, other reasons such as the influence of friends, the convenience of a teacher coming to the house, being fair to all the children in the family by providing the same opportunities for learning, and keeping children entertained or busy are other motivations for sending their children to private music lessons that surfaced during my conversations with the parents. Regardless all these other reasons, the desire to fulfill a childhood dream and to achieve a higher status symbol were the biggest motivations for Taiwanese Canadian parents to send their children to private music lessons.

### **Teaching as a Fall Back Alternative**

While looking at student motivation regarding beginning, continuing, or stopping lessons, I also took an interest in why teachers became teachers. Private music teachers usually come from a performance background (Ward, 2004). Many music graduates become studio instrumental teachers or begin teaching during their college years (Haddon, 2009). However, there is always a cause behind the effect. Why do some music students

choose private music teaching as a career?

Several reasons surfaced in this study. Similarly to student motivation for learning, motivation for teaching can also be categorized into extrinsic and intrinsic categories. The first motivational factor is related to self efficacy. The teachers indicated that music teaching was the only career they could pursue. Lily felt that she had “no choice” after she graduated because she could not think of other jobs within her capabilities. Lauren said that she was interested in being a music teacher and did not “have other specialized skills.” Sally thought that “music teaching is the only profession I can rely on.” Furthermore, Patricia explained that music teaching is something into which she can “put in her greatest efforts” and “do her best.” It is human nature to avoid feelings of inadequacy by choosing a job where we feel most competent (Stipek, 1988). It is their perception of ability that impacted on the teacher participants’ decision to teach.

A secure and stable source of income is an important extrinsic reason for becoming private music teachers (Araújo, Santos, & Hentschke 2009; Haddon, 2009). When asked why they teach, most teacher participants’ answers related to income: Lauren indicated that private music teaching brings a “stable income”; Sally said that teaching “earns bread”; Patricia was “trying to make a living”; and Frank taught to “make some bucks.” These words demonstrate a reality; many private music teachers begin by teaching for the money. However, despite the fact that teachers started teaching for extrinsic reason, their teaching motivation often became intrinsic after a few years of teaching — should they persist. Lily’s experience provided the best example: “I didn’t want to be a teacher in the first place.... I [later] felt accomplished because of teaching.... I gradually developed an interest in teaching.” In other words, Lily has put what she has acquired from teaching into practice and started to find pleasure in teaching. In addition, the simple personal

relationship in the working environment and flexible work schedule were other extrinsic motivations identified by the teacher participants.

Nevertheless, the words of teacher participants agree with Haddon (2009) and Araújo et al.'s (2009) conclusion that private music teaching is valued as a fall back career because it is difficult to earn a stable income as performing musicians. Private music teaching is the only way they know to maintain a social status which their parents have purposefully built for them.

I have highlighted the topics and themes that emerged from the private music teaching and learning of Taiwanese Canadians in this chapter. I will answer my research questions and discuss the implications of my research as well as directions for future research in the following chapter.

## Chapter Eleven: The End of the Journey

*"It does not matter how slowly you go, so long as you do not stop."*  
Confucius

I began this study as a Taiwanese Canadian private music teacher with many questions. It was my desire to understand the culture of private music lessons among Taiwanese Canadians that motivated me through the process of writing this dissertation. The purpose of my ethnographic study was to describe the private music teaching and learning culture of five Taiwanese Canadian private music teachers and five of their students and students' parents who all lived in Greater Vancouver, British Columbia at the time of the study. The main data collection methods were observations of video-recorded private music lessons, formal and informal interviews, and journaling. In this final chapter, I answer my research questions. The significance for teachers, students, and parents and directions for future research are also included.

### **Further Limitations of this Study and Possibilities for Bias**

Before proceeding to the findings, it is important to review limitations noted earlier and expand on a few additional points. First, the findings apply to the five triads identified in this study, immigrants residing in a specific geographical area and sharing a historical experience of a particular kind. The transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the conclusions depends on the judgement of the reader as to their wider applicability. The teacher participants in my study may not been truly representative of the broader pool of Taiwanese Canadian private music teachers, willing as they were to be a part of my study. Despite my attempts to be impartial and bracket my biases, that I knew some of the participants prior to the study, even if I did not know them well, may have impacted

on the findings. The teacher participants' method of recruiting parents and students could have biased the results as they chose willing parents with no explanation of the nature of this willingness. The videotaping of the lessons was not without its own difficulties. Variations in the placement of the camera and the timing of the taping, although a pragmatic necessity, were not the same across the observations. Also the lessons were all videotaped over a 2-month period towards the end of the music teaching season, before examinations. This fact limited the kinds of lessons that I observed (mostly rehearsals of known materials rather than new teaching).

Finally, most of the interviews were originally in Mandarin. It was challenging to translate the texts into English. Because it is difficult to translate errors of speech and idioms, the English quotations seem more polished than they were in the original and I had to fill in words that were implied in the Chinese original.

## **The Findings**

This study was based on four research questions. I now present my findings in a question and answer format which directly addresses these research questions.

### ***What is the context of the private music lessons of Taiwanese Canadians?***

Despite the fact that the ethnic origin of my participants was Taiwanese, the context of the private music lessons of these Taiwanese Canadians was similar to the context of private music lessons in the Western world as described in the literature (Araújo et al., 2009; Duke et al., 1997; Kennell, 2002; Pitts et al., 2000b; Sosniak, 1985). That is, Taiwanese Canadian private music teacher participants taught in a private setting either in their studio or at students' homes, usually one-on-one. Weekly lessons, annual recitals, music festivals, and examinations were all part of their private music lesson activities.



Piano was the instrument taught in these private music lessons. The curriculum emphasized Western art music.

These Taiwanese Canadian private music teachers all came from a performance background. They started their musical training at an early age and received formal musical training from universities or colleges. Many of them continued with graduate school and got advanced degrees in music performance or music education.

The parents of the Taiwanese Canadian private music students in the study all had high levels of education (college and above) and were either business owners, professionals such as doctors, or working in the Information Technology related field. The fact that they were able to continue to support their children with the expense of taking private music lessons suggests that they successfully maintained their financial stability after they moved to Canada. None of the parent participants had received formal musical training as children. They, however, enjoyed various musical activities such as listening to music and singing as amateurs.

The student participants of this research were second generation Taiwanese Canadians. All of them were born in Taiwan and came to Canada during their elementary school years. Most of them started their private music lessons at a young age in accordance with their parents' decisions. Most of these student participants were high academic achievers, and they all played more than one instrument.

Further research could determine if the many aspects of this context are typical of the private music lessons of Taiwanese Canadians across the country. Do Taiwanese Canadian music teachers come in general from performance backgrounds? How does this musical background impact on their teaching? Do Taiwanese Canadian private music teachers typically pursue higher education? If so, why? Do only economically successful,

middle class parents support private music lessons for their children and why? Will the third generation of Taiwanese Canadians follow the established pattern in regards to music lessons? If not, how does the pattern change across generations? Then, there is the possibility of cross-cultural research by comparing the contexts of Taiwanese Canadians with those living in Taiwan to determine differences, similarities and their consequences. Do the changing cultural belief systems undermine or support teaching practices acquired in Taiwan?

***What are the cultural beliefs underpinning private music lessons for Taiwanese Canadians?***

Traditional Taiwanese values had a strong but unacknowledged influence in the private music lessons of the Taiwanese Canadians in my study. Obedience to authority and avoiding challenging authority were major Confucian values that surfaced. Teachers and parents were viewed as authoritative figures in a hierarchical system. Students and children were expected to obey their teachers' instruction and fulfill their parents' expectations. As a result, children obeyed their parents' decision to send them to private music lessons, and students often played a generally passive role in the private music lessons while trying to follow their teachers' words without questioning.

In addition to the traditional value of obedience to authority, a desire for Western independence was also identified. Participants indicated that they preferred Western education over Taiwanese education because of the emphasis on critical thinking, individual creativity, personal development, and freedom of expression. Some parent participants even changed their parenting style after moving to Canada because of the Western influence. Nevertheless, despite the fact that teachers and parents seemed to be advocates for Western education, traditional values were maintained in homes or private

music lessons. The frequently contradictory behaviors found in teachers and parents served as evidence for this clash.

Overall, the main cultural belief underpinning private music lessons for Taiwanese Canadians was an apparent clash of cultural beliefs. It seems that the participants were trying to cling to and preserve aspects of both cultures or were unaware of the conflicting values they were experiencing. There is, however, a connection between “independence” and “obedience.” The literal translation of “independence” in Chinese means self-sufficient or self-reliant, which is not the opposite of “obedience” (Xiao, 1999). The desire for children to be independent is the wish for them to have the ability to support themselves. In another words, it is possible to be obedient and independent at the same time. Using this explanation, some of the contradictory behaviors can perhaps be explained to a degree. Do parents realize that the independence they favour may differ from the Western understanding of critical thinking and independence? In conclusion, after moving to Canada, these Taiwanese Canadians have formed a culture in which different cultural values are emerging. These new values are being formed from perceived desirable aspects of both cultures.

The nature of these emerging values and their impact on Taiwanese Canadians as well as on mainstream Canadian culture is a rich field for future research beyond private music lessons. How do Taiwanese Canadian parents and students negotiate the Canadian educational system? How do the conflicting values impact on family life?

***What kinds of teaching and learning experiences occur in Taiwanese Canadian private music lessons?***

The teaching and learning experiences that occur in Taiwanese Canadian private music lessons in my study are not much different from those in traditional private music

education in the West (Colprit, 2000; Costa-Giomi et al., 2005; Duke et al., 1997; Kennell, 2002; Young et al., 2003; Pitts et al., 2000a; Pitts et al., 2000b; West & Rostvall, 2003;). Similar to the Western private music teaching, most Taiwanese Canadian private music teaching followed an apprenticeship model. The one exception was that Frank taught in the Transmission perspective, perhaps because the subject (i.e., music history) is content oriented.

Taiwanese Canadian private music teachers teach to remove student doubts. The teaching styles, teaching philosophy, teaching strategies, the use of teaching materials, teacher-student communication, and the focus on music examinations in these Taiwanese Canadian private music lessons were all comparable with Western private music teaching. There are several reasons for this similarity. First, the instrument being taught in the lessons was piano — a Western instrument. Secondly, all teacher participants were trained in the Western canon. Their teaching subsequently mirrored their own learning experiences. Nevertheless, some of the music teachers were exploring more learner-centered (constructivist) approaches to teaching (Reimer, 2003) even though they were unaware of the literature underpinning the theory. Students encultured in the Canadian school system may be encouraging changes in their teachers' teaching styles. The music teachers' voiced different attitudes and teaching behaviors towards mainstream Canadian students (e.g., lower expectations and assigning less homework), preferring to work with Chinese students who were more obedient. A number of potential areas of research surfaced:

1. What are the similarities and differences among the teaching styles of Taiwanese Canadian, Taiwanese, and Canadian music teachers? Are these similarities and differences in teaching styles also found in Canadian and Taiwanese schools?
2. Do Taiwanese Canadian private music teachers teach Taiwanese Canadian students and Canadian students differently? If so, how and why?
3. Do Taiwanese Canadian music teachers prefer to teaching Chinese students?

- Why or why not? If so, how?
4. Do Taiwanese Canadian parents choose Taiwanese teachers when possible. If so, why?

The pleasure of being able to put knowledge and skills acquired from the private music lessons into practice was the main reason for the Taiwanese Canadian students in this study to continue taking instrumental lessons. Congruent with other research (Davidson et al., 1996; Hallam, 2002; Pitts et al., 2000b), intrinsic motivation was the key to successful instrumental learning. Students gained the ability of “putting the acquired into practice” through practicing their instruments. Practice strategies were introduced implicitly during private music lessons through modeling. Repetition and deliberate practice were two common practice strategies that appeared in this study. In addition, gender also had an impact on students’ learning behaviors such as instrumental choice and practice habits. These gender issues provide more opportunities for research. All of these issues could be studied in both Taiwan and Canada. Is there a gap in the achievement of boys and girls in private music lessons? Why? Who teaches private music lessons — males or females? Why? Who studies music privately more? Girls or boys? Why?

Lastly, parental involvement was also an important part of the Taiwanese Canadian private music teaching and learning in my study. Taiwanese Canadian parents were involved in their children’s musical learning through different ways of *pei*. Coaching, providing encouragement, reminding children to practice, and listening to children’s performances were the various forms of *pei* that surfaced in the study. Although the literature indicates that similar *pei* behaviors can be also found in the parents of Western private music students, parents of Taiwanese Canadian students seemed to assume greater authority in their *pei*. If or how *pei* is changing among Taiwanese Canadians as well

Taiwanese is an area for future research.

***How do Taiwanese Canadians value private music lessons?***

According to my teacher participants, the purpose of private music education is to provoke students' enjoyment of music by teaching them performing techniques, music theory, and music interpretation. Teacher participants shared a belief that music learning promotes utilitarian values such as helping to release pressure and foster a desirable temperament. In fact, rather than value the aesthetic aspect of music, Taiwanese Canadians tend to value private music lessons in a practical way.

Taking private music lesson represented a status symbol for these Taiwanese Canadians. Private music education is expensive. Parents who are capable of affording children's private music lesson must have achieved and maintained a certain social economic level. Fulfilling parents' childhood dreams and the vanity of being able to send children for private music lessons were examples of private music lessons as status symbols.

Moreover, for the Taiwanese Canadian teachers in my study, private music teaching is perceived to be a fall back job that provides financial security in a world where being a musician is a financially risky proposition.

Do Canadian and Taiwanese private music teachers, students, and parents hold similar views about the value of private music lessons? Given the strong valuing of academic achievement among Taiwanese Canadians, what importance do they place on school music?

**Significance of this Research**

I started my Doctoral program as a frustrated private music teacher who had many

questions about teaching music to young children. Over my years of study, I have learned how to think more critically, ask questions, find answers, and report my findings.

Unfortunately, most private music teachers are not researchers. Many of them may share the frustrated moments I once had. I hope this study provides insight into the world of private music teaching to help these teachers think about and understand their own experiences more fully. Hopefully, they will find the identified issues and themes beneficial to their teaching and personal development. Although the participants of my study belong to the Taiwanese Canadian culture, other private music educators might find similarities across cultures. I know that there are many Taiwanese Canadian students who study with private music teachers from other cultural groups. This study describes the experiences of the children taking lessons with Taiwanese Canadian teachers and provides a better understanding of the roles of students and their parents. Hopefully, the study will help both classroom and studio music educators develop a deeper understanding of music teaching and learning and a greater sensitivity to cultural issues that may impact on learning. A study similar to mine could be undertaken of Taiwanese Canadians studying music with non-Taiwanese private teachers.

### **Future Research Direction**

Although there is some published research on private music teaching, this body of work is small compared to the vast research on general music education. Moreover, most of the research I encountered on private music lessons were studies from the United States, England, and Australia. I also cited a few papers in this area from Brazil, Sweden, and Taiwan. Surprisingly, I did not find any systematic research about private music education in Canada. Throughout this chapter I have indicated a number of rich

possibilities for future research.

### **Last words**

I have taken a slow approach in writing this dissertation. As a novice researcher who came from a performance background, I faced difficulties in analyzing and writing but I never stopped. There were times that I doubted myself but I never stopped. What kept me going was the pleasure of putting what I was acquiring from this study into my own practice. Being able to discover knowledge and to “remove my doubts” through my own thinking rather than based on external authority has been a pleasure. Thus even though I am going slowly, I will not stop.



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## Appendix 1



University  
of Victoria

Human Research Ethics Board  
Office of Research Services  
University of Victoria  
Room A240 University Centre  
Tel (250) 472-4545 Fax (250) 721-8960  
Email ovprhe@uvic.ca Web www.research.uvic.ca

### Human Research Ethics Board Certificate of Approval

<u>Principal Investigator</u> <b>Hsin-Chih (Kim) Hsieh</b> Graduate Student	<u>Department/School</u> EDCD	<u>Supervisor</u> Dr. Betty Hanley
<u>Co-Investigator(s):</u>		
<u>Project Title:</u> <b>An Ethnographic Study of Private Music Teaching and Learning among Taiwanese Canadians in Vancouver, BC</b>		
<u>Protocol No.</u> <b>05-035</b>	<u>Approval Date</u> <b>01-Mar-05</b>	<u>Start Date</u> <b>01-Mar-05</b>
		<u>End Date</u> <b>28-Feb-06</b>

#### Certification

This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concludes that, in all respects, the proposed research meets appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Subjects.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Richard Keeler  
Associate Vice-President, Research

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the procedures. Extensions or minor amendments may be granted upon receipt of a "Research Status" form.

05-035  
Hsieh, Hsin-Chih (Kim)

## Appendix 2

### Participant consent form (Teacher)

#### ***Participant Consent Form***

*UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA*

*DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION*

*FACULTY OF EDUCATION*

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#### **An Ethnographic Study of Private Music Teaching and Learning among Taiwanese Canadians in Vancouver, British Columbia**

Dear private music teachers,

My name is Kim Hsieh. Like you, I am a Taiwanese Canadian private music teacher. I am also a Ph. D candidate at the University of Victoria. I am writing to invite you to be a participant in my doctoral research titled **An Ethnographic Study of Private Music Teaching and Learning among Taiwanese Canadians in Vancouver, British Columbia.**

Over my years as a private music teacher, I have noticed many things about my teaching. I have become curious about what happens in Taiwanese-Canadian private music lessons. Unfortunately, there is no research about the private music teaching and learning of Taiwanese Canadians. I feel that it is important to look into this culture because it is only by studying or examinationining our culture closely that we will understand ourselves more fully. The purpose of my study is to provide a description of the culture of private music lessons of Taiwanese Canadians in Vancouver, BC. In order to get a better description of the culture, I would like to study the experiences of Taiwanese Canadian private music teachers, their students, and students' parents.

If you agree to participate in this research, here is what would be involved.

- I would ask you to distribute an information letter to all your students/parents age between 9 to 12 years old. If your students/parents are interested in the research,



they will contact me. Five students/parents dyads will be selected randomly from those who are interested in the research. Age is the only criterion for student selection because children in this age group should be mature enough to provide a clear description of their experiences of private music lessons.

- The research period will be two months starting in April. During these two months, I will video-tape **four** of your music lessons with the consenting student. Video-taping will be used to minimize disruptions of the lessons and to make it easier for me to analyze what occurred. Before each lesson I will provide you with a summary of my observations. You will be invited to clarify any exchanges and add any additional information. If you are interested in watching the video, it will be made available to you. We can watch it together, or you can watch it alone. I will be interested in your thoughts as you observe your teaching.
- Besides observing your lessons, I will need to talk to you so I can have a better understanding of your views about private music teaching. Two interviews will be needed — one before the observation period and one after the observation period. While I developed questions for the first interview based on my own experiences and the literature, questions for the second interview will be related to observations of the videotapes and your first interview. Both interviews are going to last approximately one- to two-hours long. The interviews can be held in quiet places such as your music studio, home, or a quiet café ,wherever you feel most comfortable about sharing your experiences. Both interviews will be audio-recorded for later transcription.
- Because your thoughts and feeling about private music lessons are important, during the research period, I encourage you to to contact me by telephone or e-mail whenever you have questions or want to chat about the research. You are also welcome to show me any objects related to your music teaching such as your notes or thank you cards from your student.
- The language used in the research will be both Mandarin and English, whichever you prefer.
- I will ask you to read transcripts of interviews and lessons so you can check their accuracy. I hope to discuss with you emerging themes so you will have opportunities to clarify what has happened, expand on ideas, and provide new insights about my analysis.

During the interviews, you may decline to answer any question. You can withdraw from the study at anytime without any reason or experiencing negative consequences. If you

decide to withdraw from the study, I will ask you to allow me to use the information I have collected so far. If you do not consent, I will not use your data and will destroy it immediately. There are no known or anticipated risks to you by your involvement in this research. However, this study may cause some inconveniences to you including the extra time needed for the two interviews, informal dialogue, and discussion about emerging themes. You will likely not be accustomed to having a video-recording device in the studio and someone observing your teaching.

As a researcher, I will have to protect your privacy. Since I am the researcher and I will be talking and observing you in person, I will know who you are so you will not be anonymous to me. However, I will try my best to keep you anonymous to anyone else. No one but I will be able to relate the person in the research with you. I will use pseudonyms (made up names) in my dissertation and publications. Your name will remain confidential.

All information I get from you including video-tapes, handwritten notes, audio-tapes, e-mail print outs, and artifacts will be locked up in a cabinet in my private study. Data which I key-in into the computer will be saved in a password protected file. Only my supervisor and I are able to see the data. After I finish writing the dissertation, I will return the video- and audio- tapes to you and destroy all other data.

I will be discussing emerging themes with you and verifying the accuracy of my interpretations and narrative. The results of the research will be written as a dissertation. After I complete my dissertation, I will give you a copy as a thank you. I also plan to present the dissertation in scholarly meetings. Furthermore, I anticipate publishing the results of this study.

This research may benefit you by providing a description of the world of private music teaching to help you to think about and understand your experiences more fully. You might find the issues from this research beneficial to your teaching and personal development. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor.

My contact information is:

Phone: 604-931-6438    cell phone: 604-306-8569    e-mail: [hsinchih@uvic.ca](mailto:hsinchih@uvic.ca)

My supervisor's name is Dr. Betty Hanley. Her contact information is:

Phone: 250-721-7835 e-mail: [bhanley@uvic.ca](mailto:bhanley@uvic.ca)

You may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President Research at (250) 472-4545 or [ovprhe@uvic.ca](mailto:ovprhe@uvic.ca).

Yours truly,

Kim Hsieh

---

Please sign below as an indication that you have read and understand the role of the participant in this study and agree to participate as a volunteer in this research.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ agree, to participate in the research study titled **An ethnographic study of private music teaching and learning among Taiwanese Canadians in Vancouver, British Columbia** beginning in [time]. I understand that the participation is voluntary. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

**Signature:**\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**\_\_\_\_\_

I agree to be video taped during the private lessons and audio recorded during the interviews.

**Signature:**\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Please keep the pink copy and return the white copy to me. Thank you!**

## Appendix 2A

### Participant consent form (parents)

#### ***Participant Consent Form***

*UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA*

*DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION*

*FACULTY OF EDUCATION*

---

#### **An Ethnographic Study of Private Music Teaching and Learning among Taiwanese Canadians in Vancouver, British Columbia**

Dear parents of private music students,

My name is Kim Hsieh. Like you, I am a Taiwanese Canadian private music teacher. I am also a Ph. D candidate at the University of Victoria. I am writing to invite you to be a participant in my doctoral research titled **An Ethnographic Study of Private Music Teaching and Learning among Taiwanese Canadians in Vancouver, British Columbia.**

Over my years as a private music teacher, I have noticed many things about my teaching. I have become curious about what happens in Taiwanese-Canadian private music lessons. Unfortunately, there is no research about the private music teaching and learning of Taiwanese Canadians. I feel that it is important to look into this culture because it is only by studying or examine our culture closely that we will understand ourselves more fully. The purpose of my study is to provide a description of the culture of private music lessons of Taiwanese Canadians in Vancouver, BC. In order to get a better description of the culture, I would like to study the experiences of Taiwanese Canadian private music teachers, their students, and students' parents.

If you agree to participate in this research, here is what would be involved.

- The research period will be for two months starting April. During these two months, I will observe four of your child's private music lessons. Although many parents do

not come into the music studio while their children have lessons, some parents sit in with their children during lessons. That will be fine. Since want to disturb the lessons as little as possible, I will video-tape the four lessons and watch the lessons later.

- Besides observing your child's music lessons, I will need to talk to you so I can have a better understanding of your view of private music lessons. Two interviews will be needed—one before the observation period and once after the observation period. I have developed questions for the first interview based on my own experiences and the literature; questions for the second interview will be related to observations of the videotape and your first interview. Both interviews are going to be approximately one to one and half hour long. The interviews can be held in quiet places such as your teacher's music studio, home, or a quiet café, wherever you feel most comfortable about sharing your experiences. Both interviews will be audio recorded so I can transcribe the discussion and let you check it afterwards for accuracy and an opportunity to add any further details.
- Because your thoughts and feeling about private music lessons are important, during the research period, I encourage you to communicate freely with me by telephone or e-mail during the research period.
- You can speak in Mandarin or English.

During the interviews, you may choose not to answer any question. You can withdraw from the study at anytime without giving any reason or experiencing any negative consequences. If you decide to withdraw from the study, I will ask you to allow me to use the information collected so far. If you say no, I will not use your data and will destroy it immediately. Your participation in this study will have no impact on your child's music lessons or your or your child's relationship with your music teacher. There are no known or anticipated risks to you if you are involved in this research. However, this study may cause some inconveniences to you since you need to provide extra time for two interviews. You also need to get your child to lessons 15 minutes early to discuss their previous lesson.

As a researcher, I have to protect your privacy. Since I am the researcher and I will be talking and observing you in person, I will know who you are so you will not be anonymous to me. Your music teacher also knows who you are. I will, however, maintain confidentiality. No one will be able to identify you in my dissertation or articles. I will use pseudonyms (made up names) to refer to you in all my writing.

All information I get from you including video-tapes, hand-written notes, audio-tapes, e-mail printouts, and artifacts will be locked up in a cabinet in my private study. Data which I keyed-in into the computer will be saved in a password protected file. Only my supervisor and I will be able to see the data. After I finish writing the dissertation, I will return the video- and audio-tapes to you and destroy all other data.

I would be pleased to discuss the progress of the research with you during the data collection and analysis period. The results of the research will be written into a dissertation. After I complete the dissertation, I will give you a copy. The dissertation will be presented in my dissertation presentation. I also plan to present the dissertation in scholarly meetings. Furthermore, I anticipate publishing the results of this study.

This research may benefit you by providing a description of the world of private music teaching to help you think about and understand your experiences more fully. You might find the issues from this research beneficial to your children's learning and your personal development. If you have any questions, please feel free to talk to me or my supervisor.

My contact information is:

Phone: 604-931-6438    cell phone: 604-306-8569    e-mail: [hsinchih@uvic.ca](mailto:hsinchih@uvic.ca)

My supervisor's name is Dr. Betty Hanley. Her contact information is:

Phone: 250-721-7835    e-mail: [bhanley@uvic.ca](mailto:bhanley@uvic.ca)

You may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President Research at (250) 472-4545 or [ovprhe@uvic.ca](mailto:ovprhe@uvic.ca)

Yours truly,

Kim Hsieh

---

Please sign below as an indication that you have read and understand the role of the participant in this study and agree to participate as a volunteer in this research.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the research study titled **An Ethnographic Study of Private Music Teaching and Learning among Taiwanese Canadians in Vancouver, British Columbia** beginning [date] and ending [date]. I understand that the participation is voluntary. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to be video-taped during the private lessons (if I am there) and audio-recorded during the interviews.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please keep the pink copy and return the white copy to me. Thank you!**

## Appendix 2B

### Participant consent form (student)

#### *Participant Consent Form*

*UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA*

*OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT, RESEARCH*

*HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE*

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#### **The world of private music lessons of Taiwanese Canadians in Vancouver, British Columbia: An exploration of the culture**

Dear boys and girls,

My name is Kim Hsieh. I am a doctoral student from University of Victoria. Like you have to write homework from school to have grades on your report card, I have to do a research project so I can graduate from the university. My project is called **The world of private music lessons of Taiwanese Canadians in Vancouver, British Columbia: An exploration of the culture.**

When I was a little girl, I took private violin and piano lessons just like you did. My experiences as a private music student make me curious about how other private music students learn. So I was wondering if you could help me with my research project by sharing your experiences of private music lessons with me.

If you are interested in helping me, you will be asked to do the following:

- The research period will be two month starting anytime after March. During these two months, a total of four private music lessons will be observed for each teach-student-parent triad. I want to disturb you as little as possible. Therefore, I will come to your teacher's studio before a lesson and set up a video recorder. I will video record all four lessons and later observe the lessons from the video tapes. I will give and check with you a summary of my observation of each lesson before the next lesson.
- Besides observing your lessons, I need to talk to you so I can have a better understanding of your private lesson experiences. I will talk to you twice. Once



before the observation period, and the other after the observation period. Both talking sessions are going to be approximately one to one and half hour long. We can talk in quiet places such as your teacher's music studio, home, or a quiet café wherever you feel most comfortable about sharing your experiences. Both talking sessions will be tape recorded.

- Because your thoughts and feeling about private music lessons is important to me. During the research period, you can always talk to me by telephone or e-mails whenever you have something to say about your private music lessons.
- The language used in the research will be both Mandarin and English. We will be speaking in the language that you feel most comfortable.

During the talking sessions, you may decline to answer any questions. You can withdraw from the study at anytime without any reason and bad consequences. If you decide to withdraw from the study, I will have to ask you to give me the permission for using the information I collect so far. Otherwise I will not use your data and will destroy it right after you withdraw from the study. There are no known or anticipated risks to you by involving in this research.

As a researcher, I have to protect your privacy. Usually, no one would be able to identify who you are after a research is completed. Since I am the researcher and I will be talking and observing you in person, I will know who you are so you will not be anonymous to me. Your teacher is the one who introduce you to me; therefore, you will not be anonymous to your teacher either. However, I will try my best to keep you anonymous to anyone else. After I finish writing my dissertation, no one but me will be able to relate the person in the research with you. I will use made up names in all my writings.

All information I get from you including video tapes, hand writing notes, audio tapes, e-mail print outs, and artifacts will be locked up in a cabinet in my private study. Data which I key-in into the computer will be saved in a password protected file. Only my supervisor and I are able to see the data. After I finish writing the dissertation, I will return the video and audio tapes to you and destroy all other data.

This research will benefit you by providing a chance for you to share your experiences. If you or your parents have any questions, please feel free to talk to me or my supervisor.

My contact information are:

Phone: 604-931-6438 cell phone: 604-306-8569 e-mail: [hsinchih@uvic.ca](mailto:hsinchih@uvic.ca)

My supervisor's name is Dr. Betty Hanley. Her contact information are:

Phone: 250-721-7835 e-mail: [bhanley@uvic.ca](mailto:bhanley@uvic.ca)

You may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President Research at (250) 472-4545 or [ovprhe@uvic.ca](mailto:ovprhe@uvic.ca).

To participate in this research, you and your parents or guardians need to read above and sign the bottom form. **Please keep the pink copy and return the white copy to me.**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ agree:

☐ to participate in the research study titled **The world of private music lessons of Taiwanese Canadians in Vancouver, British Columbia: An exploration of the culture** beginning in March. I understand that the participation is voluntary. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

☐ to be videotaped during the private lessons and audio recorded during the interviews.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ give consent for my child \_\_\_\_\_,

☐ to participate in the research study titled **The world of private music lessons of Taiwanese Canadians in Vancouver, British Columbia: An exploration of the culture** beginning in March. I understand that the participation is voluntary. I understand that my child may withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

☐ to be videotaped during the private lessons and audio recorded during the interviews.

### Appendix 3

Example of coding chart for video transcriptions

Time	Person in action	Spoken language	Music	Facial expression	Changes in Prosody	Changes in Gaze	Gestures/spatial movement	Other actions
11:00	S	None	none	Plain	N/A	Look into the bag	Taking out music books and put them on the music stands. Head down	coughing
	T	(to student)How have you been this week?	None	Smiling, cheerful	N/A	Look at the student	Taking out her violin	none
11:01	S	(pause)not bad. Very tired because of school tests	None	Tired face	N/A	Look at the violin box and then gaze turn to the bow	Finding the rosin and apply to the bow.	N/A
	T	none	None	concerned	N/A	Look at the student	Sit down on the chair	Waiting

## **Appendix 4**

**Interview questions for the initial interview before observation (arranged in correspondence with the research questions) –**

### **What is the context of the private music lessons of Taiwanese Canadians?**

#### **Teachers**

1. Tell me about your educational and musical background?
2. How did your family support your music studies?
3. Can you tell me what the tuition fee that you charge is?
4. How do you communicate with your parents?
5. Why and how did you select the student for this study?

#### **Students**

1. Tell me about yourself? Where did you go to school?
2. How would you describe yourself to someone you want to meet?
3. Tell me about your family?
4. Are there other people who play music in your family?
5. What do you do in your free time?
6. What are your favourite things to do?
7. What do you want to be when you are a grown up?
8. What do you like the best about school?
9. What is your favourite kind of music?
10. What is your favourite piece that you are playing now?

#### **Parents**

1. Tell me about yourself? Prompts: growing up, education, moving to Canada, hopes, etc.
2. What is your music background? Prompts: Do you play an instrument yourself? Did you take lessons, attend concerts, etc.
3. What is your favourite genre of music?
4. How do you participate in the private music lessons?
5. What is your role in your child's private music lessons?
6. How do you communicate with your private music teacher?

### **What value do Taiwanese Canadians attribute to private music lessons?**

#### **Teachers**

1. What do you think is most difficult in teaching private music? What have you gained from teaching private music?
2. Why did you start taking music?
3. Why did you decide to become a private music teacher?
4. What was your greatest success in music? Who or what contributed to your success?
5. When did you feel least successful? Why?
6. What was your greatest success in music teaching? Why?
7. When did you feel least successful in music teaching? Why?
8. What is your expectation of students?
9. What do you think your parents expect you to be?

#### **Students**

1. Why do you start taking lessons?
2. What have you learned from your private music teacher so far?
3. What do you think your parents expect from you in music lessons?
4. What do you think your private music teacher expects of you?
5. Do you like taking private music lessons? Why or Why not?
6. What do you think is hard in taking private music lessons?
7. What do you think is easy in taking private music lessons?
8. When do you feel happy in private music lessons? Why?
9. When do you feel upset in private music lessons? Why?

#### **Parents**

1. Why do you send your children to private music lessons?
2. What do you expect from your child's private music teacher?
3. What do you expect from your child's private music learning?
4. What have you gained from participating in your child's private music lessons?
5. What do you think is the most difficult in private music lessons?

### **What are the teaching and learning experiences in Canadian Taiwanese private music lessons?**

#### **Teachers**

1. Tell me about your musical experiences?

2. When did you start learning music?
3. When do you think is a good time to start taking lesson?
4. How do you see yourself as a musician and a teacher?
5. Discuss your beliefs about teaching music.
6. What do you think is the purpose of music education?
7. Do you discuss practicing strategies with your student? What are these strategies?
8. How many hours of practice do you expect of your students
9. How many hours did you practice when you were a student?
10. Can you tell me the materials you use in your lessons and why you use them?
11. Do you find that you teach music the way you were taught?
12. Which private music teacher had the most impact on you? Why?
13. How do you plan your lessons? How is your lesson organized?

### **Students**

1. Tell me about your musical learning experiences. When did you start taking music lessons?
2. How long have you studied [instrument]?
3. Do you take music examinations? If so, what do you feel about it?
4. Why did you choose the instrument you are playing?
5. How much time do you spend practicing?
6. How much time does your teacher expect you to practice?
7. What do you do when you practice?
8. Why do you practice?
9. Do you like practice?
10. Who is your favourite private music teacher? Why?

### **Parents**

1. How do you encourage your child to practice?
2. How do you involve in your child's music practice?

### **What are the cultural beliefs underlying private music lessons for Taiwanese Canadians?**

#### **Teachers**

1. When did you move to Canada? Please describe your family.
2. Where did you go to school in Taiwan? Tell me about your experiences. (in school; in music)

3. Where did you go to school in Canada? Tell me about your experiences. (in school; in music)
4. What has changed since you came to Canada?
5. What is your favourite musical genre in Canada?
6. What was your favourite musical genre in Taiwan?
7. Do you find that you act differently towards Taiwanese Canadian and non Taiwanese Canadian students?
8. How would you characterize your education in Taiwan and in Canada?
9. What are the similarities and differences?

**Students**

1. When did you move to Canada?
2. Did you go to school in Taiwan? Which one?
3. Can you describe the differences between the school in Taiwan and the school in Canada?
4. Did you take private music lessons in Taiwan?
5. Do you think music teachers teach differently in Taiwan and in Canada?

**Parents**

1. Why do you decide to move to Canada?
2. If you had music lessons when you were Taiwan, can you describe your experiences?
3. What are the differences in education that you noticed in Taiwan and in Canada?
4. What do you expect from your children?
5. What do you hope your child will become?